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THE
THIEF OF BAGDAD
AN ARABIAN NIGHT'S FANTASY

As played by
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

Written for the Screen by
ELTON THOMAS

Retold in Story Form by
LOTTA WOODS



THE THIEF OF BAGDAD



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During the Production of
"THE THIEF OF BAGDAD"

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ARTHUR EDESON	Photographer
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ALBERT WAYNE	Master Electrician
C. S. WARRINGTON	Still Photographer
HOWARD MACCHESNEY CLINTON NEWMAN WALTER PALLMAN J. C. WATSON }	Technicians

THE PLAYERS

<i>The Thief of Bagdad</i>	DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS
<i>His Evil Associate</i>	SNITZ EDWARDS
<i>The Holy Man</i>	CHARLES BELCHER
<i>The Princess</i>	JULANNE JOHNSTON
<i>The Mongol Slave</i>	ANNA MAY WONG
<i>The Slave of the Lute</i>	WINTER-BLOSSOM
<i>The Slave of the Sand Board</i>	ETTA LEE
<i>The Caliph</i>	BRANDON HURST
<i>His Soothsayer</i>	TOTE DU CROW
<i>The Mongol Prince</i>	SO-JIN
<i>His Counselor</i>	K. NAMBU
<i>His Court Magician</i>	SADAKICHI HARTMANN
<i>The Indian Prince</i>	NOBLE JOHNSON
<i>The Persian Prince</i>	M. COMONT
<i>His Awaker</i>	CHARLES STEVENS
<i>The Swordsman</i>	SAM BAKER
<i>The Eunuchs</i>	{ JESS WELDON SCOTT MATTRAW CHARLES SYLVESTER

THE THIEF OF BAGDAD

Night in the Desert. The sky is velvet black and, against it, the stars hang low and gleaming. Below lies the Desert, dark and shadowy. Picked out by the light of the stars is a single lonely group, a Holy Man and a little, naked boy. The Holy Man drones over and over again the lesson he is teaching. The child listens, with his eyes fixed on the stars, until it seems to him that the long, slender fingers of the Holy Man reach to the stars themselves and spell out in star clusters the words of the lesson:

HAPPINESS MUST BE EARNED.

* * * * *

On a certain day, Bagdad, the city splendid, basked in the sun. Her towering walls, her swelling domes, her minarets that pierced the sky, shone all like silver in the sun's hot rays. Her polished pavements glistened in the light, and the stuffs in the bazaars of the stuff-sellers hung motionless in the still air.

On a ledge above the fountain near the Street of the Makers of Earthen Jars, Ahmed, the thief, sunned himself in drowsy contentment, yet kept one bright eye open lest one should go that way with gear and goods and Ahmed, the thief, should profit not thereby.

One, and another, and another delayed to drink at the fountain and Ahmed, the nimble-fingered, enriched himself with coins, and turban jewels, and pendants and trinkets till the treasury in his girdle was heavy with spoils and he boasted within himself of his rare skill in his crafty calling.

Then came one in the garb of a merchant who was of a delicate sensitiveness in this matter of purses and when Ahmed filched his money-bag, he disputed with him for possession of it, the while he lifted his voice in loud outcries to summon the watch.

Then Ahmed broadened his chest and widened his eyes and with a face made all of sweet innocence he protested that the purse was his, a keepsake, a token, a precious heritage from which he had never been separated nor ever would.

The merchant tortured high heaven with his wails. "If it be his purse," he shrieked to the watch, "let him tell what is in it."

"'Tis empty," quoth Ahmed jauntily.

Whereupon the merchant laughed mightily and confided to a bystander that the bag, though it looked flat and unprofitable, was, in reality, rich with two gold coins of fair value.

So the watch, keeping a wary eye on the contenders, thrust his hand into the bag and drew the inside to the outside, and behold, even as Ahmed had said, the bag was empty.

Then the watch bade the merchant to cease his outcrying and to be gone from that place and he gave the empty bag into the hands of Ahmed, after which, dispersing the curious who had gathered about, the watch went his way. Save for a whining beggar, Ahmed, the thief, was alone by the fountain near the Street of the Makers of Earthen Jars and he smiled craftily as he tossed the empty bag to the beggar and, unclasping his own fingers, disclosed therein two gold coins of a fair value. Tucking the coin in his girdle, he, too, went his way.

Now, though his girdle was filled, his stomach was empty, and it came to pass that he paused in his going and his nose wrinkled cunningly to the pleasant fragrance of food. With practised sniffings and hasty shiftings of his course, he followed the savoury scents until he came beneath a balcony where were honey fritters, hot and smoking and, still steaming over the brazier, a great bowl of rice cooked with pomegranate seeds.

A fat fruit-vender had his market below this balcony. He slumbered in the sun and his huge head bobbed with the violence of his snoring. The little donkey that fetched his fruit to market rested under empty panniers.

Ahmed cocked a wise eye at the sleeper and the steed. He took note of the turban cloth wound about the Tartar cap of the fat fruit-vender and of his huge knee bent at a solid angle. With such material a pulley of sorts might be fashioned and his hunger brooked no delay.

So he flicked the turban cloth from its place, weighted it with a melon and flung it over the balcony rail, and when the end came back to him he tucked it deftly under the bent knee of the fat man and tied it to the trappings of the donkey, which, when it felt his weight, believed that the end of the day was come and pulled sturdily away toward home. The fat man roused and ambled after the donkey and Ahmed was lifted to the balcony and filled his hands and stuffed his mouth with honey-fritters and rice.

* * * * *

"Gather round! Gather round! Gather round!"

Ahmed bent his ear to listen to a shrill cry echoing down the street.

"Come to the Square of the Magician! Come to the Square of the Magician!"

The shrill cry came closer. Ahmed moved along the balcony in the direction from which it came.

"Behold the magic basket! Behold the magic basket!"

Ahmed looked down. Directly below him the crier was herding the crowd collected by his calling. Now, suddenly dumb, he squatted with his fellows on the ground to watch his master, the magician.

Ahmed contentedly munched his honey-fritters and settled himself to watch, also, as one who dearly loved a good show.

With solemn incantations, the sorcerer opened his basket and lifted into it a wide-eyed boy whose youthful bulk just filled the space inside. He clamped the lid down tight on top of him and then, while Ahmed and the others watched, fascinated, he thrust the basket through and through in every part with vicious, gleaming swords.

The bystanders thrilled to the horror of it.

Next, the magician seemed to lose all interest in the boy. He cried aloud, that all might hear: "Behold the magic rope of Ispahan, woven of a witch's hair in the caverns of the Jinn."

He displayed a rope, a common-coil of rope, and, of a sudden it squirmed and writhed beneath his touch and then flew upward to hang, unsupported, in the air.

Ahmed unconsciously scratched the palm that itched to possess this rare thing that swung in front of his very face. His body swayed toward it.

Then, out of nothingness, a figure appeared high on the rope.

The spectators gaped in amaze.

It was the wide-eyed boy, unscarred and unhurt, and he slid nimbly down the rope to hold out his hands for bakshish.

This demonstration of powerful magic upset even the equilibrium of the thief. He wobbled on his perch. And then he sensed retribution nearing him in the person of the cook, raging over the loss of her honey-fritters and brandishing a long-handled saucepan.

He paused not a second for thought but sprang instant to the enchanted rope, and clung there in mid-air.

The cook railed at him from above. Below, the magician called down curses upon him. He replied to both, impartially and in kind.

But the magician had other means of bringing Ahmed low. He made a few magic passes and drew the rope to the ground. Ahmed sprawled with it. His eager eyes followed every move of the magician, who looped the rope into a neat coil. No longer could Ahmed control the itching of his palm. He grasped the rope. For an instant the two struggled over it, yanking it back and forth.

They were halted by a long drawn, sonorous wail.

From the minaret the muezzin was calling, calling: "Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to prayer!"

A hush came over the great square.

Ablutions were made, all eyes were turned toward Mecca, and with appropriate posturing, the faithful prostrated in prayer.

The rope lay on the ground betwixt him and the magician.

Watching his chance, the thief clutched the rope and sped away over the backs of the prostrate worshippers.

By the time the prayers were finished, Ahmed was dodging among the huge oil jars in the Street of the Makers of Earthen Jars. The magician and his assistants were racing madly after him. They glimpsed him as he was winding the rope about his slender hips. They shouted execrations. Ahmed poised for an instant on the edge of a jar and then a series of leaps took him into the very end jar of the row.

Once inside this, he thrust through it with the sole of a foot long hardened by walking unshod on the polished pavements of Bagdad.

So it was that when the magician was searching for him in the huge jar at the end of the row, Ahmed was rolling across the square huddled inside a smaller jar.

The rolling jar crashed against the foundation stones of a building and shattered into bits, but, before his pursuers discovered him, the thief made the magic passes that sent the rope flying upward. Quickly he climbed to a window ledge and crept inside. He pulled the rope. It stuck in the air. Vainly he jerked at it till he remembered the magic passes, whereupon he made them and drew the rope safely after him.

Once inside the building, he was brought to a halt by the sound of a voice.

"O true believers, gathered in this sacred mosque," said the voice.

Now never before in all his life had Ahmed, the thief, been within the walls of a mosque. He listened, curious.

"Earn thy happiness in the name of the true God," the voice rolled on. "Toil, for the sweets of human life by toil and moil are found."

Ahmed bethought him of the rich treasure hidden in his girdle, of the delicate flavor of rice cooked with pomegranate seeds, and of the magic rope wrapped about his loins. He shouted with laughter.

"Toil to gain the sweets of life,"—he had never heard anything so diverting.

"Thou liest!" he shouted down to the Holy Man, and dropped from the window to the floor of the mosque.

The few worshippers who had lingered in the mosque after prayer-time to listen to the words of the Holy Man turned upon him angrily. He thrust them aside and pushed boldly toward the door.

He paused before the Holy Man. For a fleeting instant his soul trembled under his calm gaze. He knew not why he faltered and to hide his confusion he roared vigorously the tenets of his own creed.

"Fools!" he thundered, "What I want—I take. My reward is here. Paradise is a fool's dream and Allah is a myth."

The angry worshippers surged toward him. The Holy Man stretched forth his arms and calmed them.

With none to oppose him, the thief turned on his heel and flung out of the room.

* * * * *

Throb. Throb. Throb.

The great drum on the city wall gave forth the sound. Six burly blacks, whipped to their task by a lusty overseer, were beating a call.

Ahmed listened to discover what it portended.

High up on the Stairway of the Police-Master, a voice was ringing out.

"Honest citizens of Bagdad, here is a thief to be flogged!" called the voice.

Ahmed's skin prickled as he heard.

He looked toward the whipping-stage. Instinctively he covered his eyes to shut out the sight of the wretch being dragged to punishment.

When he looked again, the rogue had been beaten into unconsciousness and flung into the pit below the shackle-posts.

"Let all thieves beware! Four and twenty lashes for the stealing of this jewel," the Police-Master shouted and held up a ring of beaten gold, set with a jewel of price.

Ahmed's palm itched again. He mingled with the crowd until the Police-Master, with the ring in his purse, passed by him. A hasty and undetected kick tripped the Police-Master and sent him sprawling. With every evidence of solicitude, Ahmed helped him to his feet and brushed from his garments the dust of the streets. When they separated, Ahmed unclasped his fingers and disclosed a ring of beaten gold, set with a jewel of price.

He looked at the curious crowd that had grouped around the pit below the whipping-stage to watch with callous interest the writhings of the wretch who had been flogged. "Bah!" Ahmed told himself. "The fellow lacks wit. Now I am past-master of frauds and feints. They will never catch me and flog me. I am too clever by far."

He sighted an approaching litter and, whining like a beggar, he managed to come close enough to it to roll under it. Clutching a pole, he stole a ride and, at the same time, slipped a ring from the finger of the veiled passenger in the litter.

So Ahmed, the thief, was carried in state to the landing place near his secret dwelling-place. He rolled comfortably off at the proper time and, making sure he was not observed, dropped into the mouth of an abandoned well. At the bottom of this well he had contrived his den and here he lived with one other. He threw a bit of earth at a heap of rags on a low shelf. "Rouse yourself, Bird-of-Evil," he said, "I have brought home treasure."

The heap of rags shook, parted and disgorged a scrawny fellow, small of stature and evil of face, who greeted Ahmed with smooth words and fawning gestures, nor left off praising him for a moment.

Ahmed stood on his hands and a rain of coins and jeweled trinkets fell from his girdle. Bird-of-Evil was rapt in admiration of his craft and cunning. But Ahmed believed that his rarest booty was the rope he had taken from the magician.

"See," he explained, "it is a magic rope. With it we can scale the highest walls."

* * * * *

Such was the case of the thief who looted within the confines of the City of Bagdad. But elsewhere:

In the Kingdom of the Mongols—far to the East in Asia—a furious tyrant reigned and bade and forbade. He was a stubborn despot, a devil arrogant, and his hosts were lessoned to his will so that, at his bidding, they raided neighboring kingdoms and cut off highroads and carried away the daughters of kings.

The name of this accursed ruler was Cham Shang, to which he had vaingloriously added, The Great.

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The name of this accursed ruler was Cham Shang, to which he had vaingloriously added, The Great.

On a day, Cham Shang, the Great, sat upon his throne in his Palace of Ho Sho. At his feet, that they might minister to his swollen pride, his grandees prostrated themselves, touching the floor continuously with their foreheads until it should please him to give them good leave to rise.

In order that the stream of Cham Shang's malevolence might be diverted from his own people, the chiefest of his ministers bethought to excite anew his greed and, for that purpose, he ordered fetched into the great throne room that which would do this thing.

Now, that which he ordered carried into the throne room had been made by the principal handicraftsmen of the kingdom and for the making thereof they had bespoken merchants and fakirs and travelers and wanderers, asking of each what he might tell in the way of item and detail and particular.

As they had learned from the speech of the strangers, so they had carven from ivory and overlaid with white silver a true representation of a palace, strong of base, tall of build, nailed with nails of gold and silver. There were vestibules and vast halls, pavilions washed with gold and painted in diverse colors, jetting fountains, streams flowing in marble channels, doors of teak-wood furnished with locks of white silver, domes and cupolas of alabaster, latticed windows, stairways of ebony and pillars of black marble, and the castle and its environs of gardens and fruiteries and courtyards were compassed about with a high wall.

So the chiefest of Cham Shang's ministers had this carven representation carried into the throne room and he set it before Cham Shang, making low obeisance and saying:

"O thou who holdest dominion over many provinces and settest thy foot on the necks of a million subjects, live thou forever in all ease and delight of life."

Then he continued:

"Behold, I bring before thee a carven likeness of the Palace of the Caliph of Bagdad."

Whereupon, Cham Shang, the Great, did descend from his throne and did circuit the likeness of the Palace of the Caliph of Bagdad, examining minutely the richness and grandeur thereof. So he broadened his breast and proclaimed:

"It shall be mine. What I want—I take."

Now the chiefest of his ministers had aforetime charged a runner that, upon this saying he should make entrance to the throne room. So the runner entered and, kotowing to the King of Ho Sho and Prince of the Mongols, he said:

"Celestial Majesty, at the next room suitors do go to Bagdad, seeking in marriage its royal Princess."

Cham Shang hearkened him to the speech of the runner and, summoning the chiefest of his ministers, he said unto him:

"The gods of our dynasty direct us. We shall enter Bagdad as a suitor."

Thus it was in the Kingdom of the Mongols, and joyance filled the heart of the chief minister in that he had turned the malignity of Cham Shang away from his own people.

* * * * *

A moon waxed and waned and a new moon was born.

It was mid-afternoon in Bagdad, at the beginning of the new moon.

Outside the Gates of Bagdad a gigantic Nubian called to the warder on the walls: "Open wide the Gates of Bagdad! Open wide the Gates of Bagdad! We be porters bearing trappings for the adornment of the Palace. On the morrow suitors come to woo our royal Princess."

The walls of Bagdad were broad and lofty. Her great gates were built in triangular sections, each section sharp-pointed, bristling with teeth of steel. The warder recognized the Caliph's head porter and the leaves of the gate slid smoothly back into their sockets.

The long line of porters passed through the opening, each with his burden of treasure for the Palace. Within the packs and bales and hampers they bore upon their heads there were robes of honor, heavy in texture and rich with jewels; pattens of gold set with pearls in silver; prayer-carpets brilliant of sheen; cushions of ostrich down fringed with broidery of red gold; rolls of fine Coptic linen; kerchiefs of brocade; veils of gold-purpled silk; hollow gems as big as ostrich eggs; strings of jacinths; chest of pearls, peacocks with spreading tails and huge silver jars of sweet-smelling unguents.

Through the streets of the City, under high balconies with silken awnings, past courtyards whose pavements were cooled with sprinkled rosewater, by gardens rich in trees and fruiteries, they traveled until they came into the Square of the Palace.

Round a corner, of a sudden, came Ahmed, the thief, and after him trotted his pigmy associate.

At the sight of the laden porters, Ahmed's palm felt a premonitory itching.

Revolving in his mind how he could make this chance meeting redound to his

profit, he fell into line behind the porters, signaling his companion to follow.

There was a halt as the line waited for the portcullis to lift at the entrance to the Palace courtyard. Looking along the line, Ahmed saw the opening yawn to receive them and pondered how he might enter with them.

With a hasty word to Bird-of-Evil, he took from him the cloak he carried on his arm, and rolling him into a compact bale, he lifted him to his head. The line of porters moved again and he moved with them.

Just as he boasted to himself that his stratagem had succeeded, the last of the porters disappeared beyond the opening and between Ahmed and that opening, two spears crossed and held him until the portcullis dropped clanking to the ground, and he was shut out. Disdaining him as beneath consideration, the watch left him to face the close-woven chains that had closed against him.

Disgusted, he dropped his bundled companion to the hard pavement. When he had picked himself up, they ran along the high walls of the Palace Courtyard and measured the height with their eyes.

"The magic rope," said Bird-of-Evil.

Ahmed nodded knowingly.

He pricked his arm with his dagger and marked on the wall his sign manual, a triangle with a crescent.

"To-night," he said.

* * * * *

Now the light of the sun departs and, black and deep, the night begins to fall. Then the full-orbed moon rises in majesty and floats in space above the minarets and domes of Bagdad.

The clanging together of the steel toothed leaves of Bagdad's gates serves notice on the world that none may enter.

The portcullis of the Palace drops with a thud and fierce tigers come from underground tunnels to pace their watch before it.

Gorillas, taller than the tallest Palace guards, are set to sound warning should alien feet impinge upon the Palace grounds.

Night reaches its noon. Ahmed, the thief, and his companion come to the foot of the Palace walls, for the noon of night is the daytime of rogues.

The thief unfurls his magic rope and makes the sign that lifts it in the air. His fellow crouches on the ground behind his black cloak.

Ahmed climbs by the rope to the top of the wall and then to other walls, through windows, up long flights of stairs, past a giant, sleeping Nubian, through corridors. His bare feet make no sound.

Through a lattice he beholds three eunuchs fast asleep before a coffer of sandalwood, ornamented with gold and silver. By the itching of his palm he knows the coffer contains rich treasure.

He first makes sure that the eunuchs are fast bound in sleep, then he tries to lift the lid of the chest. It is locked. The keys are fastened to the girdle of a eunuch. He endeavors to detach them. The eunuch rouses. His fellows rouse with him. Ahmed crouches low behind them. Their unwieldy bulk conceals him. Yawning, they settle themselves to deeper slumber.

Softly he slides the chest along the floor until he can lift the key to the lock.

He opens the chest. He plunges his hand into it and burrows among the jewels, reveling in their sheen and shine.

Suddenly, the hand in which he has clasped a necklace of priceless pearls is stayed.

Through the wall beyond him there comes the tinkle of soft music.

Poised, alert, he listens, nor looks again at the heaped coffer.

* * * * *

Softly and softer still the music sounded.

Beyond the wall, the fingers of the hidden lute-player were moving slowly and more slowly.

A Mongol slave girl, waving a fan, was gradually diminishing its motion as she watched the gentle breathing of a maiden who lay on a canopied couch.

The Mongol slave girl's hand grew still. She put her fingers to her lips and whispered:

"The Princess sleeps."

A third slave girl smoothed the silken coverlid over the slumbering Princess.

Then, stepping softly, the three slave girls, with many backward glances, slowly left the room, the Slave of the Lute still plucking the strings of her instrument.

* * * * *

As the sound receded, Ahmed was drawn with it.

Lightly as a thistledown borne along by a current of air, he was carried along by the fascination of the music of the lute.

Up a flight of stairs, along a narrow corridor, he came upon the vision under the diaphanous silken canopy.

He looked—went away—came back and looked again.

He tried in vain to drag himself back to the heaped-up treasures of the sandalwood chest. He came back to the bridge-head.

Scarce knowing why he did so, he glided down the bridge and, stepping lightly across the rail, found himself close to the couch of the sleeping Princess.

He crouched there, listening to her soft breathing.

At the side of the couch were the Princess' tiny slippers, still bearing the warm impress of her little feet. He picked up one of them and examined it with curious interest.

Then—a strange new thrill.

Moving to nestle more comfortably among her cushions, the sleeping Princess lifted one slender white hand.

It fell athwart his rough brown fist.

His heart almost stopped beating. He dropped the slipper and the string of priceless pearls. Involuntarily he drew his hand away from the thrill of that contact. Something—the movement of his hand—the strange touch—the unconscious realization of an alien presence—awakened the Princess.

She sat up and flung aside her silken coverlet.

The startled thief flattened himself upon the floor and, by trick of chance, the covering fell across him, hiding him completely from sight.

The Princess—alarmed, she knew not why—sprang from her couch and called aloud for her slaves.

From one part of the Palace to another, the alarm spread and the attendants sprang into action.

The keepers of the tigers and gorillas led the beasts about ready to set them loose in the gardens should an intruder be discovered.

The slave girls, lying asleep across the doorway of the Princess' room, awoke and rushed to answer her call.

The eunuchs searched the corridors. The huge Nubian sworder stalked from room to room.

The slave girls soothed the Princess and prevailed upon her to return to her couch. When it seemed that she was going to sleep, the Mongol slave girl dismissed the other two slaves. She, herself, remained to replace the discarded coverlet.

She stooped to pick it up.

From beneath its folds a brown hand was thrust. It held a dagger whose sharp point pricked her flesh menacingly.

A breath of whisper warned her to make no move nor sound.

So they remained—the hidden thief and the frightened slave—until the breathing of the Princess betokened that she was once more in deep slumber.

Ahmed, the thief, threw aside the shelter of the silken spread and rose to his feet, compelling the slave girl to do likewise.

Threatening her always with his dagger, he impelled her across the room to the embrasure of a doorway.

He glanced back at the couch and yearned to look again upon the sleeping Princess.

With a cushion snatched from the floor he propped the dagger in such a way that the slave girl believed it was his clutch that held it at her back.

He glided to the couch barely evading the eunuchs who were returning from their fruitless search. He stood motionless, watching the Princess. His eyes drank in her pure loveliness and his heart swelled within him. He made no move toward her. He was content to feel the welling joy of being in her presence.

A stifled scream warned him.

The slave girl had detected the trick of the propped dagger. The crash of a door told him that she had gone to summon help.

On the floor at his feet, where he had dropped them, lay the silken slipper and the necklace of priceless pearls.

He reached toward them. The pearls he brushed aside with a careless unconsciousness. The little slipper he lifted and clasped tight in his hand as he ran toward the window.

He made a flying leap through the window and landed in a tree beyond. It bent with his weight until it bent over the wall and he dropped to the ground. His magic rope he had left in the treasure room. Its loss impressed him not at all.

At the foot of the wall his dwarfish companion came to him, grinning, greedy, expectant. His puzzled gaze encountered the exalted look of the thief.

"Where is the treasure?" he asked avariciously.

Ahmed seemed not to see him, but he answered his question in a voice that thrilled with feeling.

"It is here," he said holding the slipper high in front of him. "'Tis here," and he touched his head. "'Tis here," he laid his hand over his heart.

He strode off into the shadows of the night and Bird-of-Evil, perplexed, bewildered, pottered after him.

* * * * *

Morning came.

Scourged to their tasks six stalwart blacks beat the great drum on the Palace wall.

The townsfolk came running to the sound, bent on discovering what new thing it foretold.

From a high gallery a wazir intoned an announcement:

"This day do suitors come from all the East to seek in marriage our royal Princess."

Shouts of acclaim greeted the proclamation, for rumors of the grace and beauty and loveliness of this favorite daughter of the Caliph had seeped through to the populace of Bagdad and surmises about her formed their staple romance. They wished wholeheartedly for her happiness.

* * * * *

Long-time had it been the custom of this Caliph's house to accord to its favorite Princess the right to choose among her suitors.

Her Palace was equipped with a pavilion from which, unseen, she could command a view of the mighty Princes who would arrive to seek her in marriage.

The floor of the pavilion was of rare and precious marble. The waters of its fountain were mingled with rosewater. Its curtains were of gold tissue bordered with bands of silver set with pearls. The pavilion was spread with cushions purpled with red gold and a settee inlaid with stones of price and covered with azure brocade awaited the coming of the princess.

The favorite slaves of the Princess came to this pavilion long before the hour when the suitors were expected to arrive. They were in a state of thrilled excitement. Forgotten was the alarm of the night before. All their thoughts were centered on the arrival of the suitors.

Came the Princess, her stature straight, her face shaming in radiance the noon-day sun, and her raiment of Mosul silk, embroidered with gold and bordered with brocade. The pendants in her ears were compound of pearls and balass-rubies and her brow was bound with a fillet of precious jewels.

Her hands were clasped before her and her eyes were, as it were burning questions shining from under her jetty lashes.

"This is my day of days!" she murmured. "I'm all aflame. But how to choose my suitor—"

Ouoth the Mongol slave girl:

"Summon thee the Slave of the Sand Board. In sands from Mecca she can divine thy fate."

So the Princess seated herself on the cushioned divan and bade the Slave of the Lute to discourse sweet music the while the Slave of the Sand Board read the tables of sand and the Mongol slave girl gently waved a fan odored with Nadd.

And the Slave of the Sand Board sifted again the thrice-sifted sand from Mecca and spread it smoothly on the sand table. Then she breathed upon it until the shifting sands took shape.

"The sands of Mecca shape a rose," she told the Princess.

"Interpret the meaning thereof," bade the Princess.

The Slave of the Sand Board studied the figure in the sands with minute care, then spake she thus:

"In sooth, my Princess, the meaning is after this manner. Whoso of thy suitors shall first touch the rose-tree in the Palace courtyard, him Allah designs for thy husband."

The Princess pondered, then she arose and looked from the pavilion down into the courtyard below and, beholding there a rosebush, tall as it were a tree and laden with bloom whose fragrance filled the air, she inwardly believed what the tables of sand had foretold.

Now the Mongol slave girl concealed within her a heart of guile and, having secretly observed all that had taken place, she crept slyly from the pavilion, knowing well what she had a mind to do.

But the Princess, missing her not, returned to her couch of brocade and regarded for long time the rose that the sands of Mecca had shaped on the tables of the sand reader.

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Thus it was as regards the Princess, but as regards Ahmed, the thief:

On the ledge above the fountain near the Street of the Makers of Earthen Jars, he sat, brooding over the little silken slipper he had brought with him from the

Palace on the night before. And there passed by that way fruiterers and butchers and grocers and confectioners and perfumers, each laden with the monies he had taken that day in trade, but Ahmed, the thief, noted them not at all, but dreamed of the flower-white brow and coral-red lips of the Princess.

As it were a lodestone, the silken slipper drew him toward the Palace.

At the gates thereof, he paused to look through the close-woven chains of the portcullis, then wandered on until he found a vine up which he clambered until he found a leafy perch which overlooked the secret pavilion of the Princess.

Now Bird-of-Evil plied no craft nor trade and depended for the continuance of his days on the gear that Ahmed fetched to the den in the abandoned well under the market of the seller of chanders wood.

So it was that when Ahmed returned not at his accustomed time, he feared misery to himself and went in search of the thief to the ledge above the fountain. When he found him not, he meditated deeply. "Tis here—Tis here—" he mimicked. "Nizzy noodle, he's turned love-bird."

"He has gone to the Palace," he told himself, finally. So, following after him, he came upon the thief high up in his leafy perch, watching the Princess of his dreams.

The dwarf settled himself beside him, beholding the love-longing in the face of the thief and debating within himself how he might turn the situation to advantage him.

"She is a rare jewel, my love-bird," he said at length. "Something beyond your reach you prince of thieves. Yet, once upon a time" he pursued craftily, "a Princess was stolen from a palace under the very eye of Harun-al-Rashid."

The words penetrated the thief's musing, and his countenance, that had been the countenance of one in a sleep-vision and fair to look upon, became once more cold and crafty. He looked hard at his companion, questioning him how it might be possible to ensnare a Princess.

"They found a way into the Palace," said that wily one, "and with a subtle drug they drowed her and carried her away."

In sly pantomime he showed how it was done. Fumes of hemp overcame the Princess. She swooned away and while she was in the swoon, they carried her from the Palace.

So, marveling at the ease of it, Ahmed let himself down from the perch, revolving in his mind how he might make entrance to the Palace.

* * * * *

Again the beat of the gigantic drum on the Palace wall.

The sound aroused the Princess from her reverie. Her excited slaves gathered round her.

"The suitors are at the Palace gates," they said.

With fast-beating heart, the Princess went to the high vantage point from which she could oversee all that happened in the courtyards below nor fail to know if one of the suitors should brush the rose-tree in passing.

As far as her eye could reach, courtyard opened into courtyard, each swept and sprinkled and compassed about by high walls. Trees lifted their tall branches, birds warbled and flowers breathed perfume.

By the royal gate stood a chamberlain. To him came two grandees who proclaimed the name and degree of the first Prince.

The chamberlain turned about and, lifting his voice, called out for all to hear:

"Here cometh the noble Prince of the Indies whose Palace glows with an hundred thousand rubies."

Then there was heard the sound of lute, the dulcimer and tabret, and all manner of musical instruments, and dancing-girls danced to their music, preceding the Prince of the Indies, and after them came nabobs and grandees and castellans.

The Prince rode upon an elephant as he were in a vast tower in a seat girthed about with silken bands, and by the side of the elephant walked its driver bearing in his hand a hook wherewith he goaded the beast and made it to go to the right or to the left, and back of the Prince came the people of his court, likewise mounted on elephants with jeweled trappings.

The raiment of this Prince was of gold brocade, embroidered with gems worth a kingdom and when he came to the place where—all unknown to him—the Princess could gaze down upon him, his expression was the expression of one who is purse-proud and haughty.

So the Princess turned away her face, saying:

"He glowers. I like him not—with all his rubies."

Then said the Slave of the Lute:

"Allah forbid that he should touch the rose-tree."

Whereupon the Princess blanched and turned again to watch what was taking place in the courtyard below and when the Prince of the Indies came near unto the

rose-bush, she clasped her hands tightly until he had passed it by. Then she breathed freely again and said:

"Allah be praised, he touched it not."

And her handmaidens rejoiced with her.

So the Prince of the Indies went on into the Palace.

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To the chamberlain at the royal gates came two other grandees who proclaimed the name and degree of the second Prince.

So the chamberlain turned him about and called loudly for all to hear:

"The Prince of Persia whose fathers fought at Feyjoo five hundred years ago."

Then came the Persian Prince. His purple robe was of the richest silk, in ample folds, embroidered with gold and jewels. The camels that carried him had housings of gold brocade and the litter swung between them was purfled with silver. In his ears were earrings of gold inlaid with gems. He wore golden bracelets on his wrists and a chain of gold and jewels about his neck. Before and after him came his fan-bearers and fly-chasers, his porters and bread-makers, his cooks and his cup-bearers, his water-bearers, his awakers and his adorners. And there were camels and mules bearing bales of treasure and slaves flaunting flags and banners.

So he came to the place where the Princess could gaze down upon him and she discovered him to be of those who refrain not from eating during all their waking hours and who seek ever after novel delicacies. His corpulency was to her a matter for distaste and she said:

"He's fat and gross as if he fed on lard."

Spake the Slave of the Sand Board:

"I pray that he turn away from the rose-tree."

So the Princess clenched her hands until the Persian Prince had passed the rose-bush by, whereupon she breathed freely once more and spake:

"Thanks be to Allah, he has turned him away from the rose-tree."

And the Persian Prince went on into the Palace.

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Now, without the royal gates, the townsfolk pressed close to view the pomp and magnificence of the stranger Princess. Ahmed, the thief, and his fellow, coming to the gates to discover if perchance there was a way into the Palace, were astounded at the spectacle.

"What meaneth it?" Ahmed asked of the bystanders.

An old greybeard made answer to him:

"Our royal Princess hath come of marriageable age," he said, "and these who enter in such splendor are Princes comes to seek her hand."

Ahmed looked at his companion.

That wily one, who was master of craft and trickery and all manner of double-dealing, winked with his eye and motioned with his hand and whispered:

"Come to the Bazaars of the Merchants. Let us clothe ourselves and perform high-class rogueries."

So Ahmed and his evil-faced associate betook themselves from that place.

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To the chamberlain at the royal gateway came yet two other grandees who declared the name and degree of the third Prince.

So the chamberlain faced him about and called loudly for all to hear:

"Cham Shang, the Great, Prince of the Mongols, King of Ho Sho, Governor of Wah Hoo and the Island of Wak."

Whereupon the Mongol Prince entered with great pomp and parade and pageant.

His litter was borne upon the shoulders of twenty men and it was as the chamber of a great palace. The frame of it was sacred bamboo lacquered in black and gold with incrustations of ivory and mother-o'-pearl. Its sliding panels and the recurved edges of its quadruple roof and the lanthorns that hung at its corners were fashioned of woven silk painted over with designs of lotus and dragons and plumaged birds.

Going before the Prince of the Mongols and coming after him were his priests and his drum-smiths, his chess-players and gold-beaters, his stewards and his tea-brewers, his minstrels and his Tartar pipers, and over each, according to his rank, was an umbrella of many tiers, or, carried in front of him, a banner of silk, adorned with embroidery of gold thread.

With the Mongol Prince, in the litter, was the Wielder of the Ink-Brush. He, for certain evil deeds committed in his past, was forced to appear at all times with uncovered head and shaven poll. To him spake secretly the Prince of China:

"Bagdad is a mighty city. Fail I to win the Princess, it shall be mine by strategy."

Now when the Princess looked down and beheld this Prince, she shivered as with an ague and said to her handmaidens:

"Oh horrible. He chills my blood with fear."

So she and her slave-girls clutched each other in dread lest this Prince should brush the rose-tree in passing.

The Prince of the Mongols, accompanied by the Wielder of the Ink-Brush, would have passed on into the Palace but he halted, offended, for—with unenlightened disregard of the delay demanded by the dictates of courtesy—a man, small of stature and weazened of face, was making an announcement to the chamberlain at the royal gateway.

The little man, who bestrode a donkey, wore a turban many times too tall for him and a cape many times too long for him and spoke in a voice many times too loud for him, as he declared his master to be:

"Ahmed, Prince of the Isles, of the Seas, and of the Seven Palaces."

The Mongol Prince spoke thus to the Wielder of the Ink-Brush:

"There is no such rank nor title."

And he looked with unfavor on the progress of this self-styled Prince of the Seas. Ahmed came with one attendant, but he rode a horse of noble trappings and his own garments lacked naught of splendor for they had come from the shops that were filled with the rarest stuffs and the costliest merchandise in Bagdad.

To the Princess, the arrival of Ahmed in simple state came as a respite. He sat his horse with ease and wore his gold-cloth turban and his raiment of Alexandrian silk with jaunty grace.

And as the Princess looked down and beheld him, love of him, became firm-fixed in her heart and she said to her handmaidens:

"Tis he would make me happy. Allah guide him to touch the rose."

So, trembling like a slender reed, she waited.

Now the Mongol slave-girl had pondered how she might advantage herself of the knowledge that the Princess gave credence to the revelation in the table of sand, and when she beheld that one of the suitors was a Prince of her own land, her heart was gladdened.

She crept close so that she could signal him through a lattice and she whispered to him in his own tongue:

"Celestial Majesty, the superstition of the Princess centers on that rose-tree. Fail not to touch it."

So this Prince so-frightful of favor walked with measured and deliberate purpose toward the rose-tree. He stretched forth his hand to pluck a rose.

Dire dismay clothed the Princess as with a garment. She smote hand upon hand, tears filled her eyes, and horror-stricken plaints were stifled in her throat.

Strange are the decrees of destiny.

A honey-bee, loading his little thighs with golden treasure, was hovering over the rose. Disturbed, he flew from the flower and menaced the outstretched hand of the Prince.

The Prince drew back. He brushed the bee aside with his fan, and, so doing, turned its course toward the oncoming Ahmed. It lighted on Ahmed's spirited steed. Its sharp sting pierced the sensitive ear of the horse. The animal sprang unexpectedly from the ground and tossed its unprepared rider straight into the very midst of the rose-tree.

The Princess gasped.

The Mongol Prince was transfixed.

Ahmed, himself, sat up among the leaves and blossoms of the rose-tree and testified to his safe and sound condition by cheerfully appropriating a rose.

"Laud to the Lord," said the happy Princess and with a lingering look at Ahmed who was, by this time, descending from the tree, she left the parapet.

So quickly was the happening over that none had witnessed it save the Mongol Prince and the Princess.

Ahmed slid to the ground at the very feet of the Mongol Prince who addressed him with insolent urbanity.

"How tragic, O Prince," he said, placing supercilious stress on the word Prince, "How tragic if you had been killed and an end put to your noble family."

But Ahmed only continued airily brushing imaginary dust from his garments and salaamed politely to the foreign Prince.

So the Prince of the Mongols went on into the Palace, but Bird-of-Evil warned Ahmed: "Make haste and steal the Princess. The Mongol pig suspects you." So, concealed by shrubbery, they stole into the garden beneath the pavilion.

Said Bird-of-Evil, "Let us drape this tree with your cape. Topped by your turban of gold, it will appear to be yourself. If one comes asking for you, I shall say you are in meditation."

It was done as he said. Then he drew from his girdle a bit of black rag and a small jar.

"Sprinkle a few drops of this on this patch," he began. •

But Ahmed shook his head.

"It were better to use this rose," he argued, and so the rose of destiny was drenched with the drug of drowsiness.

Above, in her pavilion, the Princess mused over the Prince of the seas.

Below, Ahmed found a vine that would bear his weight and clambered up the side of the pavilion. He carried in his hand the saturated rose and climbed over the parapet with it.

Now, when the Princess saw him so near to her, she drew herself with due modesty into the veiling shelter of a curtain of golden gauze, but when he offered her the rose, she accepted it as a message of fate and became at once a sweet compound, demure, yet bold.

While Ahmed slyly waited for her to inhale the odor of the drugged rose, she drew him toward the tables of sand and told him, with shy sweetness, the mystic meaning of the rose imaged there.

"Behold," she said happily, "Allah foretold thee with a rose."

Scarce listening to what she was saying, he watched the play of her sensitive features as she spoke. In her eagerness, she reached toward him her slender hand. Her cool, white fingers fell once more athwart his rough brown fist.

He knew again that sweet, wild thrill.

Breathless with the urge of it, he pressed his lips to her blue-veined wrist, and, in a moment, they were in each other's arms, conscious of naught save the exquisite fervor of their love.

Shyly they drew apart and looked at each other with adoring eyes.

The Princess, to hide her happy confusion, lifted the rose to bury her face therein.

Ahmed trembled with fear. His shocked exclamation drew the Princess' questioning attention but, with quick dissembling, he took her in his arms and tenderly regained possession of the rose.

Now, in the garden below, Ahmed's midget associate walked to and fro, pausing now and then to address a word of advice or admonition to the cloaked and turbaned bush.

A guard approached him and, with elaborate gesturing, the dwarf begged him not to interrupt the reflections of his master.

Warned, however, by this, he took the garments from the bush and going to a position below the pavilion, he shrilled a signal to Ahmed to hurry through the execution of his plot.

Thus brought back to a realization of his false position, Ahmed, he scarce knew how, took leave of the Princess and departed from the pavilion. He was conscious only of an overwhelming desire to flee from this place where he did not belong—from this sensation for which he was unfit.

But the Princess, whose heart was enslaved with the love of him, noted not his abashment and farewelled him in the sweet hope of a speedy reunion.

At the foot of the wall his companion accosted him with shrill impatience as to the whereabouts of the Princess.

As one in a trance, Ahmed looked back toward the pavilion.

"The very world has changed its face," he murmured.

He crumpled the rose and flung it from him, repeating over and over again:

"I must away from here. 'Twas wrong to come."

Then would he have departed therefrom but certain officials of the Palace came upon him and with low obeisances and salaams of honor they appraised him that the Caliph awaited the suitors.

So the machinery of state engulfed him and he was borne along.

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The Princess retired to her sleeping-chamber and bade her handmaidens to clothe her afresh with garments of gold stuffs inwoven and studded with gems and a veil of fine silken gauze, richly embroidered.

So the handmaidens busied themselves in the tiring of her, combing her long black tresses with a comb of gold, smoothing the raiment about her graceful slim form, making her veil to fall in folds of beauty, so that the image reflected in her polished silver mirror was pleasing unto her.

Now the heart of the Mongol maid was full of wiles and guiles, and, plotting how the Prince of the Mongols might see her mistress unveiled, she drew him into a little used corridor and opened for him a panel that gave on the sleeping-chamber of the Princess so that he saw her in all her beauty. And the Prince of the Mongols took oath within himself that, come what would, he would have this Princess and the Throne of Bagdad. And he went from this place contriving how this should be brought about.

Thus it was as regards the Prince of the Mongols, but, as regards the Princess: There came her eunuchs, bearing, as was the custom of the house, the symbols

of the suitors, carved of alabaster by the chiefest craftsmen of the realm. And they were for the Princess to choose therefrom.

The first symbol was in the form of an elephant, with housings and trappings and the carved figure of a Prince seated in the howdah atop. And the Princess looked at it and said, musingly:

"One comes from India, offering wealth untold. And shall I choose for wealth?"

And she shook her head in negation and put the symbol away from her.

The second symbol was in the form of a camel wroughten with cunning workmanship and rarely accoutred and the figure atop of it was carved with great care. So the Princess looked musingly at this symbol and did say:

"From Persia one. His boasted line dates back five thousand years. And shall I choose for birth?"

So, remembering the fat and funny figure of the Persian Prince, her lips curved in a little smile and she shook her head and put the symbol away from her.

The third symbol was a litter canopied and fringed and supported by silver poles encrusted with jewels and in the center thereof a carved figure. And, looking upon it, the Princess shivered as she said:

"The Prince of the Mongols. To him a million subjects bend the knee. And shall I choose for power?"

So, shuddering, she put this symbol away from her.

But the fourth symbol was a noble horse with trappings of silver and a rider whose face shone as the sun. And the Princess clasped this symbol to her breast and said:

"Prince of the Sea, thou bringst but love. Then thou art everything a Prince should be."

So, by this token, her handmaidens knew that the Princess had made choice among her suitors, and word of her choosing was sent to her royal sire.

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Such was the case of the Princess, but as regards the suitors:

The Emperor of the Mongols, the Prince of the Indies, the Persian Prince and Ahmed of the Isles of the Seas were summoned to the Throne Room of the Caliph.

This vast saloon was builded all of polished marble which shone black and liquid as if it were flowing water. Against its walls were veil-like tapestries wrought in designs of red gold and white silver and jacinths and balass-rubies. Scattered everywhere were hollowed pearls filled with musk and ambergris and Nadd and perfuming the air with their odors.

The Throne of the Caliph was of alabaster studded with precious stones. Before it lay a silken carpet and its cushions were of white brocade fringed with pearls.

On either side of the Throne, ranged in their order, were the Princes and Chamberlains, the Emirs and the Wazirs and Cavaliers with bannerols and standards unfurled.

In the midst of the Throne sat the Caliph, stately of stature and worshipful of aspect, and his beard was hoary for he was stricken with years.

For each of the princely suitors a place had been prepared.

For the Prince of the Mongols, a bench of teak-wood marquetry with ivory and ebony.

For the Prince of Persia, a seat of black-veined marble inlaid with lapis-lazuli and covered with silken stuffs.

For India, a dais curiously adorned with open work and silver damascene and jewels.

And for him of the Seven Palaces, a couch of ivory and carnelian made soft with cushions of perfumed silk or frayed with gold.

And in each place sat the suitor for whom it was designed and back of each stood his chiefest attendant.

Now, Ahmed, Thief of Bagdad, in the sweet joy and wild woe of this new emotion that had overtaken him, was as one in a daze. He looked about him at the vast hall, the concourse of nobles, the Caliph on his Throne and the Princes on their divans, and his heart sank within him. He was stunned with the magnitude of his offending.

But his pigmy associate was prinking and pranking and strutting in swelling pride because that their new trickeries had brought them to this pass and from time to time he poked and pinched Ahmed to make him attend upon the words of the Caliph.

For to do his guests signal honor, the Caliph arose on his Throne and stepped toward them by two steps, giving them fair greeting, after which he spake thus unto them:

"Know ye all that eyes never saw fairer maiden than my daughter, for she is endowed with beauty and loveliness and brightness and perfect grace and has been taught writing and philosophy and all known tongues. So have I bound myself by an oath that I will not marry her save to him whom she shall choose."

When they heard these words of the Caliph, the suitors reared their heads proudly,

each believing that himself would be the favored one, excepting only Ahmed, the thief, who drooped his head in shame that he had lifted his unworthy eyes to one so far above him.

Whereupon the Caliph continued:

"It befallerh, therefore, that the Princess has made known to me her preference among you and her ring of choice will be placed upon the hand of her favored suitor."

Then did the chief of the eunuchs, attended by his blackamoor foot-pages, carry the ring of choice adown the great hall along the middlemost line thereof, and the eyes of all were centered upon him so that he swayed from side to side in excess of prideful haughtiness and vainglory.

So he passed by the Prince of the Mongols, the Princes of Persia, and the Prince of the Indies and came to where Ahmed sat, eying his approach askance.

Kneeling before Ahmed, the chief of the eunuchs placed upon his hand the ring of choice which was of fine red gold and set with two flawless emeralds in the shape of two hearts joined.

Then did rancor invade the hearts of each of the other suitors and they spoke each to his attendant, saying that the choice had fallen awry.

But to Ahmed it was as if the ring of choice were of molten metal and his finger burned under the touch of it so that he wrenched it off, and then, mindful of where he was, he set it back on his finger, and his flesh quivered under it.

Then the Caliph summoned Ahmed to the Throne and greeted him with fair words as the chosen suitor of the Princess and heir to the Throne of Bagdad.

And Ahmed, the while he bent his head to the Caliph and placed upon his hand the kiss of homage, kept his eyes ground-wards in humility of spirit and self-abasement.

In the great Feast Room of the Palace, tables had been spread and adorned with sweet-scented flowers and sprinkled with musk-pods and rose-water. In the cressets that lighted it, aloes-wood was burning and giving off delicate fragrance. On the tables were all manner of fruits on platters of red gold, and sweetmeats and viands befitting royalties, and beakers and flagons of crystal filled with rare sherbets, cooled with snow.

So the Caliph summoned all who were present to follow him to the Feast Room, but the three Princes who had come from afar set up such a clamor of complaint and muttering and grumbling that the ears of the Caliph were deafened with the uproar and he noted not that Ahmed, the chosen suitor of the Princess, let the procession of ceremony pass him by until he stood alone in the vast Hall of the Throne.

And, as he stood pondering in his heart how he might reach the Princess and abase himself before her, Ahmed wot not that the Mongol slave girl crept by him and knew him for what he was.

Sore of heart and dejected of bearing, Ahmed went through the door that led to the garden, but the Mongol maid found the Wielder of the Ink-Brush and whispered to him that this Ahmed was a thief who but the night before had robbed the Palace. Whereupon, the Wielder of the Ink-Brush betook him to his master, the Prince of the Mongols, and repeated what had been revealed to him.

Now the Princess found every moment of separation from her lover longsome so that she eased the pain of waiting by watching the moon kindle the sky with its light. From the garden below there came to her the delightful scents of roses and jessamine, lavender and gillyflower, and thyme and violets. So she looked down into the garden and, behold, there was Ahmed come as if in answer to her love-longing.

And it pleased the Princess to summon her favorite handmaidens and bid them go with her to the garden below that she might surprise her lover, and, perchance, have speech with him there.

So it was that while Ahmed paced the gardens wondering how he might come to the Princess, lo, two slender hands reached toward him from the shelter of a tamarind tree and two eyes, shining with love and laughter, looked into his. For the Princess, in the excess of her joy was a very sprite of mischief, bent on tender teasing and fond playfulness.

But Ahmed gave her not back smile for smile, and his face was the face of one who could not support his despair, so that the Princess was constrained to gravity and she said:

"O my lord and sovran of my tenderness, what troubleth thee?"

Manifest upon Ahmed were the signs of his love and distraction and as the Princess reached out her hands to comfort him, he placed in the cupped hollow of her hand the ring of choice.

Amazed, bewildered, hurt of soul, she questioned him with wistful eyes. And when Ahmed's eyes met those of the Princess, they burned with the violence of his suffering, and he spake straightway, glossing over nothing:

"O Princess of high estate and glory, I am not of the Sons of Kings. I am less than the slaves who serve you—a thief, a wretched, outcast thief."

But the Princess continued to question him with her eyes, for, overwhelmed as she was, she could not give speech to her dismay.

So Ahmed told her of his shame, how he had led the irresponsible life of the streets, guided only by the evil bred in darksome alleys and noisome dens, his mind poisoned with the philosophy stolen from his evil environment.

And, never raising his eyes to her face, he went on in a low voice, dissembling nothing, saying how, with ignoble intent, he had pilfered the very garments he was wearing that he might enter the Palace and carry her away perforce.

"And then," he said, haltingly, "I saw thee—I loved thee—thy pure spirit wrought a change in me—I know not what. Thy kiss—honey on my lips and fire in my veins—made manifest to me the grossness of mine offense."

Still the Princess spake not and, daring at last to lift his eyes to her face, he beheld her with trembling lips, the rosy bloom of her cheeks turned ashen and overflowed with violent floods of grief.

"O my Princess," he said humbly, "I can bear a thousand tortures—endure a thousand deaths—but not thy tears."

But the Princess, though her slender form was racked with her sobbing, encompassed him with looks of sweet condonment, and, with gentle speech, addressed him thus:

"Thou art not altogether what thou sayest. There is a soul of goodness in thy evil that must redeem thee."

Now while it was thus and thus with the Princess and Ahmed in the garden, this was the case in the Feast Room:

The Wielder of the Ink-Brush reported to the Emperor of the Mongols what the Mongol maid had revealed to him, whereupon the Mongol Prince rose in place and denounced Ahmed in these terms:

"Foul desecration, O most noble Caliph, has been wrought upon your ancient house. This Ahmed is but a common thief."

When the Caliph heard these charges, he waxed wroth with exceeding wrath and his rage was like to strangle him. So he called in a mighty voice for his officers of justice and commanded them that they find Ahmed and drag him to the Feast Room.

So the officers set about searching the Palace and the grounds, and the sound of their going to and fro and their loud calls one to another, crying: "This Arab Prince is but a thief, hunt him down!" were heard by the Princess.

Half aswoon with terror, she begged:

"Quick! Hide thyself. If thou art found with me they will be merciless."

But Ahmed said in his heart:

"They seek me justly. Thus will I atone."

So he moved not from his place, and when the Princess saw that such was his plight, she pressed back upon him her ring of choice, saying to him:

"I love thee. Thee alone I love."

For that she knew if he were found with her, nothing could exceed the cruelty of his punishment, she was constrained, weeping-eyed and heavy-hearted, to withdraw into the shadows, lest the guards should see her and bear witness against him.

So Ahmed was dragged to the Feast Room and the Caliph hurled maledictions upon him in his fury, buffeting him in the face with his hands, and thundering:

"You dog! The ground thirsteth for your blood."

And he commanded the guards to strip him and flog him, for that he was a thief.

So they beat him until their arm failed them and he fell to the ground in a swoon. Then they looked at their ruler for his further behest.

When the Caliph saw the welts which the whips had left on his bared back, the fire of his rage was not quenched but he shouted the louder in his anger:

"Devise further tortures for him. Remove him from hence. Fling him to the great ape. Let him be torn in sunder, rended limb from limb, until no piece of him remains so large as the paring of a nail."

And they set Ahmed on his feet and dragged him from the hall.

Such was the case in the Feast Room, while in the garden the Princess was beating her breast and stopping her ears to shut out the sound of the blows, and the burden of her suffering was heavy upon her.

Now the handmaidens of the Princess saw the tenders of the beasts loose the great ape, a huge beast, taller than the tallest Palace guard, fierce and untamed, venomous and malignant. And when they saw him, it was understood of them what punishment was to be meted out to Ahmed. So they went in haste and told the Princess.

In the violence of her grief, she swayed from side to side, so that her handmaidens supported her. But the stress of her agony cleared her mind and restored its keenness and she snatched from her throat a string of priceless pearls and gave them to her handmaiden, saying:

"Make haste. A pearl to every guard. Have him set in safety through the secret panel into the street."

And it was done, even as the Princess had said.

Through the secret panel into the street they thrust him, and the dark of the night hid him from the regard of people, the while he painfully dragged himself up and rested his bruised and battered body against the wall.

When his swimming senses settled, he beheld the ring of choice upon his finger and his heart burned with love of the Princess.

* * * * *

Thus it was as regards Ahmed, but as regards the Princess:

Her father came to her and sternly bade her choose again from the real Princes who remained, but she set her will against him and remained dumb in his presence, so that he grasped her arm with roughness and would have compelled her to yield, but, weeping and moaning, she threw herself on her divan and hid her face from him.

Then he accused her bitterly, calling her undutiful, ungrateful, lacking in dignity and pride, and he departed from her, declaring that he himself would make the choice.

Whereupon the Slave of the Sand Board crept to her side and whispered:

"Betray not the sands of Mecca. Gain time. Defer the outcome."

Again the keenness of her mind came to her aid, and she called out to her father to return and hearken to her plea, saying:

"O my father, it is too soon for me to know my mind about these Princes. Leave it to destiny. Send them away to seek rare treasures. Let them return at the seventh moon. Who brings the rarest treasure, I will wed."

And while her father meditated, came his soothsayer, wagging his head wisely and propounding:

"When marriage plans have gone amiss, the seventh moon betokens bliss."

So her father consented and went his way.

* * * * *

All the night through, Ahmed sat at the foot of the Palace wall, beneath the secret panel, abiding the ache of his wounds and sunk in self-abasement.

All the night through, the Caliph and the Princes discussed the saying of the Princess, the while they feasted and made merry, and because that each of them believed he knew the hidden place of a rarity which none other could exceed, and because that the Caliph reiterated that to the successful suitor would go the throne of Bagdad, and because that the Mongol Prince had a heart full of guile and welcomed the delay in that it would further his secret plan, they accepted the terms and agreed to return at the seventh moon with their offerings.

All through the night, Bird-of-Evil, by reason of his diminutive size, kept himself hidden from sight and listened to the royal debaters, from time to time pilfering for himself bits of food and drink.

All through the night, the Princess hid herself in a by-room of her sleeping-chamber and wept in secret.

When morning came with its sheen and shone, Ahmed roused and drew his stiffened body upward.

When morning came, the Caliph farewelled the Princes, bidding them godspeed.

When morning came, the beasts that guarded the Palace through the night were led through the underground tunnels to their daytime quarters, seeing which, Bird-of-Evil slipped into an empty tunnel and made his way to the street. There he came upon Ahmed and hailed him gleefully:

"Come, if thou still wouldst steal her," he told him, "I have found a way through the tunnels of the tigers."

But Ahmed's soul was purged of thievery and he attended not upon the words of the dwarf.

Then was there a fanfare of trumpets and the beating of kettledrums and forth from the Palace gates came the raised and fluttering standards of the Princes.

Ahmed, seeing the Princes departing, watched them in wonder.

"They go," said Bird-of-Evil, "but they will return at the seventh moon bearing gifts. The one who brings the rarest wins the Princess."

So he renewed importuning Ahmed to return into the Palace through the underground passage, but Ahmed flung him away and departed from him, staggering with weakness as he walked. And Bird-of-Evil followed his slow progress, keeping at a distance behind him.

When morning came, the Slave of the Sand Board comforted the Princess, reading the sands anew and saying:

"Lose not thy hope, the rose persists"

And something good will come of this."

Swaying painfully, by reason of his hurts, Ahmed traversed the streets of Bagdad, half insensible that his purpose was to escape from the importunings of Bird-of-Evil.

And when Bird-of-Evil caught up with him again and plucked him by the sleeve, pestering him to return with him to their den and pursue his wonted calling, Ahmed pushed him from him and, scarce realizing where he was, shut himself away from him in the very mosque where, but yesterday, he had bitterly railed at the teachings of the Holy Man.

Bird-of-Evil made an insulting gesture.

"He has turned lily-white and goes mewling to the mosque," he said, jeering. "Here our roads divide," and, shrugging and mincing, he turned on his heel and walked out of the life of Ahmed.

Within the mosque, Ahmed dragged himself to the very spot where he had so boldly announced his self-complacency. Now he prostrated himself in true repentance and humbly.

The Holy Man touched his wounds tenderly, but Ahmed was unconscious of his outward hurts. He knew only that his heart and soul were bleeding within him.

"What wantest thou?" asked the Holy Man.

"I want what is beyond and above me."

"Why dost thou not take it?"

The thief said humbly, "I cannot."

The Holy Man looked at him with tender quizzicality.

"Thy song hath taken a new turn," he said.

The thief smiled a wry smile and said sadly:

"The song of the boaster is easily stilled."

Then the Holy Man lifted him to his feet and set himself to probe his awakening soul.

* * * * *

Outside the gates of Bagdad, the Mongol Prince, sheltered by the silken panels of his litter, conferred with his Wielder of the Ink-Brush.

"Stay thou in Bagdad," he instructed him. "I will send thee warriors in disguise. Build me an army within the walls."

So the Wielder of the Ink-Brush, covering his shaven poll with a turban of damietta stuff, and hiding his silken garments under a striped kaftan, slipped secretly from the litter and went back into the town.

While in the mosque, the Holy Man dealt wisely and tenderly with the bared soul of Ahmed, the thief.

He learned of the thief's love for the Princess, of her beauty, her purity, her tenderness, and her utter inaccessibility.

"'Tis right—'tis wholly right," the thief said resignedly. "'Tis right that she be given only to a Prince. Her nobility places her beyond the reach of lesser man. 'Tis right, too, that she be given only to a Prince who brings rare treasure. Her worth places her beyond the reach of one who comes with empty hands."

The Holy Man regarded him with appraising eyes. Then he spoke:

"Allah hath made thy soul to yearn for happiness, but thou must earn it."

Ahmed looked at him, half-shrinking as if from a rude joke, half-eager as one who would ask how.

"On the bedrock of thy repentance and humility thou canst rear any structure," said the Holy Man. "Fare forth and test thy manhood's worth."

And he beckoned Ahmed to follow him.

* * * * *

The Caliph, puzzled and irritated by the untoward happenings of the Princess' birthday, betook himself to the cell of his soothsayer. But the cryptic utterances of the sage only puzzled him the more.

Stirring the coals in his mystic brazier and consulting in his book of necromancy the pages that swing open without the intervention of human hands, he smiled shrewdly and pronounced:

"Three suitors leave thy city gate,
But four are numbered in her fate."

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And, at the very moment outside the gates of Bagdad, the Holy Man put into the hands of Ahmed a provision bag and a sword, telling him: "At the end of the way is a silver chest that contains the greatest magic. Go forth. Be brave. Control thy destiny, and come not back till thou hast won thy goal."

Ahmed took from his finger the ring of choice. Flinging it into the air, he gave it a sharp cut with his sword that parted it in two rings. He placed one on his finger and gave the other to the Holy Man.

"Give this to her who hath already my heart," he said, and fared forth alone to test his soul.

The Prince of the Indies, the Prince of Persia and the Prince of the Mongols traveled in company as far as the Caravansary of the Towering Rock in the Desert.

Here they separated to go each to his own country.

The Mongol Prince, with suave courtesy, pitched their parting to a key of fair and pleasant rivalry.

"Great Lords of Asia," he said, as they lifted their goblets in farewelling, "good fortune to you—second only to mine own."

Then he bowed low, and with an affectation of amiable affability, he added:

"Let us meet here at the end of the sixth moon and travel to Bagdad together."

So the Persian Prince headed his camel train toward Persia and the bazaars of Shiraz.

The Prince of the Indies, whilst kettle-drums beat and trumpets blared, spread his ensigns and standards to the breeze and turned his elephants toward India for that he knew that on the barren plain that lay to the northwest of Kandahar there was an idol, old and forgotten, but concealing a rare treasure.

And the Prince of the Mongols secretly gave orders to a runner: "Set spies to follow each of these Princes," he said, and, planning how he would secure rare treasure, he, too, departed for his own country.

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Thus it was as regards the three Princes, but as regards Ahmed:

He suffered fatigue and hardship and every known peril of travel, but he fared onward, forgetful of his wounds, careless that his unaccustomed limbs were wearied with the strain, thinking only and ever of the task on which he was bent.

So he came at length to a narrow defile that led to the Mountains of Dread Adventure.

Here a hermit lived in solitude and renunciation of matters mundane.

Ahmed saluted him courteously and, answering his questioning, told him:

"I seek a magic chest."

The hermit regarded him kindly:

"Thou hast little inkling of the dangers manifold and dire that encompass this treasure," he said, "but, as thou hast the firm courage and fast resolve to pursue it, I will help thee."

So he recounted what dire perils of fire and monsters, demons of earth and sea, lay beyond the defile, and said:

"If thou dost win past these, thou wilt come upon the cavern of enchanted trees. Touch with this talisman the midmost tree."

So Ahmed took the talisman and fared onward.

* * * * *

And in Bagdad, the Holy Man, coming to the garden of the Princess, bestowed upon her the circlet that was half the ring of choice.

She knelt in gratitude and kissed his hand.

"His face to me is lamp and light," she said. "When will he return to me?"

"He, too, may return by the seventh moon," the Holy Man told her, "but his way is strait and hedged about with perils. Pray for him."

"I will invoke Allah in his behalf day and night," she answered. "He is dearer to me than my hearing and my seeing and my soul cleaves unto him."

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THE FIRST MOON

Now when it was the first moon, the Princess, hiding her love in her lonely heart, did scan night's heavens, wondering in what dire and distant lands the moon shone on her lover.

And Ahmed: Faring onward from the hut where the hermit lived his life of holy poverty, he entered the defile that led into the Mountains of Dread Adventure.

On either side rose adamantine cliffs that at their tall summits came brink to brink to make a roof that barred the light.

The abysmal gulf was floored with fissured rock. It pressed on his uneasy feet as it were underlaid with liquid fire, and thick, black smoke gave off a noisome stench.

Clangorous thunder assailed his ears. Subterranean hurricanes blew hot upon him.

But he pursued his toilsome wayfare, saying ever to himself:

"These are my just deserts and, if I perish, that is Allah's will, but, if I perish not, I go not back till I have won my purpose."

So, with trembling limbs, he staggered forward on this uncouth path until the narrow walls gave outward and a livid light struck on his eyeballs.

Knowing not how many days he had spent within the narrow confines of this precipitous gorge, he hurried onward toward the light, only to find his way was crossed with surging walls of flame, edged with red lightning. The widening gulf flamed in a fiery deluge.

Ahmed beheld the portentous curtain sway backward and forward in fiery waves, then, with bent head and stubborn lips close-pressed, he plunged beyond it. Thus he came to a place where every grisly chasm, cleft and crevice belched monstrous flames.

His unaccustomed flesh shrank. His long undisciplined soul rebelled. He braced his quivering body and turned his harassed eyes back upon the path which he had come. He would return. He would not suffer further.

Then his eyes seemed to penetrate the wall of flame. A spectral figure like unto the hermit's waved him on. The ring of choice upon his finger became a cool band of courage.

Cleft and chasm and crevice, those pits of weltering flame, he vaulted each, and penetrated ever further through this Valley of Fire.

So he came at length to where a noble tree sent forth a stream of sweet water, cool to his flesh and refreshing to his lips. And praising Allah for His cleansing fires and for that his soul had withstood the temptation to retrace his steps, he fared onward.

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THE SECOND MOON

Such it was as regards Ahmed, but thus was the case of the Prince of Persia:

This Prince had a body of special servants in number like unto an army.

An adorer beautified him, making his complexion delicate with paints and powders and perfumed unguents, and causing his eyes to seem large and luminous by coloring the upper and lower lids.

Porters carried soft coverings to add to the divans he sat upon and caparisoned his camel so that a seat on its back was softer than the softest couch.

Cooks and bread-makers prepared the novel viands on which he gorged himself and were ever seeking to augment them in number and variety so that they might win the rewards he offered for inventors of new pleasures.

For that he constantly stuffed himself with rich foods, he was at all times inert, drowsy, or buried in deep slumber, so that he had an attendant called an Awaker, whose duty it was to prod him until he roused when it was needful for him to bestow his attention.

Now the Awaker had been bought in the slave-markets to serve as a page whilst he was yet a young child and had grown in the favor of the Persian Prince by reason of his watchfulness, since it was so that he never prodded him amiss into wakefulness nor ever suffered him to lose advantage by slumbering. And he had become the chiefest attendant of the Persian Prince and the one on whom he depended for the carrying out of all important devisings.

When the Awaker heard the Caliph unfold the demands of the Princess that the suitors should be set to compete with each other in the discovering of rarities, he bethought him of his grandfather, a crippled beggar in the bazaars of Shiraz and a tale he had been wont to tell.

"There is a vender in the Bazaar of the Rug Merchants," the crippled beggar had whispered mysteriously, "who knoweth not that he has in his possession the greatest rarity in the world. It is a rug, of great shabbiness, faded in color and blurred in pattern, so that no one will buy it by reason of its meanness. On a night, by reason of mine infirmity, I slept in the gutter that abuts on the booth of this rug vender and, in the dead of night, a Jinnee of monstrous size and fearful favor came down from the skies, riding on this rug. The noise and violence of its coming awakened me and the fierce and lowering look of the Jinnee caused my side muscles to quiver and my teeth to chatter, so that I closed mine eyes in fear, pretending to sleep."

"But," he continued, "my curiosity overcame my fear and I peeped betwixt my eyelids and did see the Jinnee dismount from the rug and tearing open the awning of the rug vender's booth, shove his rug into a mean position at the bottom of the rug-vender's store."

"Thereupon," the crippled beggar had said, "the Jinnee turned himself into a Marid ape and, climbing up to the top of the booth, he disappeared from my sight."

Mindful of this tale, the Awaker guided the Persian Prince to the bazaars of Shiraz and, whilst the Prince slumbered in his litter, the Awaker searched out the cripple who was his grandfather.

"Knowest thou if the magic rug is still in the booth of the rug-vender?" he queried.

"It remaineth there to this day," the crippled beggar made answer. "Day after day the rug-vender and his wife accuse each other, each calling the other a gull, a dupe, a gudgeon, for having been cozened into taking so cheap and foul a thing in trade."

"Then will I purchase it," said the Awaker.

So two porters from the Persian train carried the crippled beggar to the booth

of the rug-vender and he secretly pointed out the magic rug.

Now the wife of the rug-vender was loath to part with the rug because that it was a bone of contention between her and her husband and gave her each day a choice pretext for baiting him.

So she pointed out rugs of rare beauty and value and disparaged this one.

But the Awaker, pretending he wanted it for a gift to an enemy, and that none other but this soiled and grimy thing would suit his purpose, cajoled her into selling it to him and he had it carried from thence.

Then, prodding the Persian Prince awake, he said:

"My master, I have secured the greatest rarity in the world, the magic rug."

So he placed the rug in the litter and the Persian Prince yawned and returned to his slumbers, whilst his train moved out of Shiraz and none of them had knowledge that a Mongol spy had made note of all that had taken place.

THE THIRD MOON

Moon followed moon and each moon stirred the heart of the Princess to love-longing, for that she thought that all things were easy save to be parted from her lover, but she pondered over the things the Holy Man had told her and fed her soul with hope.

Ahmed journeyed days and nights, and when it was the third moon he came nigh unto the cavern of enchanted trees, but, when he had entered therein, his ears were assailed by a loud snorting and rustling and, lo! a prodigious dragon barred his advance. Belching fire and smoke, the dragon came snarling and bellowing from between two beetling crags.

Albeit the monster towered above him as it were a huge mountain and he a bit of brushwood at its base, he drew his sword and set himself to fight past it. Whereupon it cried out with a cry so terrible that it made the earth to tremble and came upon him to rend and ravin him.

Then Ahmed pierced between the mammoth scales of it with the sharp point of his sword and it blew a fiery blast at him and sparks flew from its mouth. But by reason of his much persevering, his sword, by chance, pierced the soft and vulnerable flesh beneath the creature's nether jaw, so that its great tail lashed as it were a tempest and it reared up and Ahmed slashed the mammoth breast of it with his sword and it perished, so that Ahmed won past it into the cavern of enchanted trees.

Now the midmost tree of the cavern was twisted and riven as if stark winds had long-time blown upon it. The branches of it were in the semblance of arms and the riven trunk of it resembled the two legs of a man and branchlets, hanging from the top of it, seemed as hair hanging from a man's head.

So Ahmed touched the tree with the charm which the hermit of the defile had given him and lo! it shuddered and shivered and creaked and moved from its place, speaking as it were a man:

"What wilt thou?"

And Ahmed said:

"I seek a silver chest that dost contain great magic."

So the talking tree spoke further:

"In that thou has fared so far, thou hast manifested true courage, so will I guide thee yet further."

And the talking tree gave him a bit of bark on which was graven a chart with directions to go here or to go there, and spake a couplet:

"The Old Man of the Midnight Sea

Will guide you to the star-shaped key."

And, when Ahmed would have spoken further with the talking tree, behold again it stood fixed in one spot, twisted and riven and moving not.

So Ahmed made to resume his course.

Then, from the shadowy roof of the cavern there came the sound of whistling which resolved itself into the flapping of monstrous wings and a giant bat swooped down upon him and would have beaten him to death with its wings but that he slew it with his sword.

So he left that place and ceased not faring over mountains and deserts for many days.

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THE FOURTH MOON

Now when it was the fourth moon, the Prince of the Indies came unto the barren plain that lies to the northwest of Kandahar.

For there was on this plain an image of basalt, in stature a thousand times that of a man, and the pupils of the eyes of it were crystal globes.

The Prince of the Indies had a knowledge concerning the eyes of this

image, for that in his childhood it had been told to him by one who admonished him to keep forever the secret buried in his breast, but the teller had remembered not the words of the couplet:

"Hold fast thy secret and to none unfold,
Lost is a secret when that secret's told."

So now, the Indian Prince, searching for rare treasure, came hereunto and gave order to a slave that he ascend to the eye of the idol.

Now the feet of the idol were as high as a housetop, and the six-several hands of it were higher than a tall castle, and the neck of the idol, encircled with a necklet of jewels in size like unto roc's eggs, was higher than a lofty tower, and the head of it was as high as a cloud-topped mountain.

The slave, holding fast to one after another of the massive fingers of the idol, clambered upward, withal there was great fear in his heart.

When he had made past the six-several hands of it, he grasped tightly one great jewel of the necklet and another until he came to the huge throat. Then, bit by bit, dizzy with the great height of it, clinging with hands and with knees and with feet, he came past the chin and the mouth and the huge nostrils of the idol and stood at last within the socket of the eye.

Then the Prince of the Indies signaled him that he must do what he must do, so, taking from his garments an edge-tool, he pried from its place the crystal globe that was the pupil of the eye of the idol.

After this, he stood up in the eye-socket, wrapping the crystal globe in the folds of his garments, and would have made sign to his master that what was done was done.

But fear overcame him and his senses swam so that he could no longer keep his footing, whereupon he swung out into space and fell from the great height to the feet of his master far below.

The Prince of the Indies troubled himself not about the life of the slave, but searched his garments until he found the crystal, whereupon he lifted it high in the air, exclaiming:

"I have the greatest rarity in the world, this magic crystal."

Then the Indian Prince and his train of attendants moved away from Kandahar and none of them had knowledge that a Mongol spy had made note of all that had taken place.

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THE FIFTH MOON

Ahmed fared on over wilds and wolds nights and days until he came to the Midnight Sea.

And while he looked upon the night-invested waters, lo! there appeared thereon a bark which shimmered like silver and the boatman thereof was the Old Man of the Midnight Sea, and the hair of him and the beard of him were long and silvern.

So the Old Man of the Midnight Sea moored his bark and said unto Ahmed:

"Draw nigh unto me and unfold the narrative of thine adventures."

And Ahmed told him all that had befallen him from first to last.

Quoth the Old Man of the Midnight Sea:

"An thou hast endured to come so far, I will help thee to go farther."

So he took Ahmed to his bark to the middle center of the Midnight Sea and gave him a magical juice to anoint his face, saying:

"Now will water become to thee as air."

And he added:

"At the bottom of the Sea is an iron-bound box. There you will find a star-shaped key."

So Ahmed plunged without delay into the waters of the Midnight Sea, and the fishes of the sea flitted hither and thither and floating seaweed parted to give him way, and his eyes were not holden by the weight of the water nor was his breathing.

And when he had fared down—down—fathom beyond fathom—he came to the floor of the sea, and on the floor thereof was a great coffer, quaintly fashioned and bound with huge bands of iron. So Ahmed lifted the lid of it and found the star-shaped key clasped fast in a shell. And, as the talking tree and the Old Man of the Midnight Sea had told him, he possessed himself of it.

Now he would have closed the coffer and gone from thence, but he felt his head environed with hairy arms that stretched out huge and manifold. So he turned about and faced a monstrous sea-beast like unto the father of spiders, with baleful eyes and loathsome carcass, spouting cataracts of noxious vapor.

Such was the evil plight of Ahmed.

So he drew sword and closed in upon the monster, striking him oft-times with his sword until, with one last jet of its horrid vapor, the sea-spider gave up its evil life in vanquishment.

So was Ahmed free to depart.

Then a perfumed breeze caressed his cheek and his ears were ravished with indescribable sweet sounds like fairy gems turned liquid, and turning whence they came he beheld a daughter of the sea, lighting her way with a jewel that shone like the morning and beckoning him that he should follow her through the wall of the sea.

So, forgetting the Old Man of the Midnight Sea, Ahmed followed after the shining light and came into a rock-walled palace hall, hung with brilliant lustres of limpid crystal whose light was the light of jewels within them.

The palace hall was sumptuously fitted. Everywhere were great stools, golden, silver, leek-green emerald, and crusted with countless gems.

On each of the stools were daughters of the sea and, on the highest stool, their queen, wearing a crown diademed with jewels. She was surrounded by sea-maidens girdled with pearls and corals and cut emeralds.

The queen of the sea-maidens and all the daughters of the sea beckoned to Ahmed with languorous gesturings. With voices of sweet melody they wooed him to stay with them and be their king. They seemed to him passing lovely and, because of the long way that he had come and the hardships thereof, he thought that it would be good to rest within these rock-guarded walls and be ministered to by these fair daughters of the sea.

Then did the ring of choice upon his finger become a circlet of tenderness as it were the gentle pressure of the white hand of the Princess and, of a sudden, his eyes were opened and he knew the daughters of the sea for what they were, temptresses to divert his steps from the way on which his feet were set, and he turned him away from the palace of the queen of the sea.

When they knew that Ahmed was aware of them as they were, the daughters of the sea became hard of face and the voices of them became coarse and without music.

But Ahmed fared upward through the water, fathom beyond fathom, until he came to the surface of the Midnight Sea and clambered into the bark, displaying to the Old Man of the Sea the star-shaped key which he had fetched.

Quoth the Old Man of the Midnight Sea:

"Far above the land that borders this sea is the Abode of the Winged Horses. Oft-times when this sea is like glass under the fair white light of day, I look into the water and see them mirrored there, skimming the skies on pavement of the clouds."

The Old Man of the Sea pointed to the key that Ahmed had found in the iron-bound box.

"That star-shaped key will give you entrance to their abode," he said. "Take the white horse that nibbleth at thy right hand, for he alone knoweth the way to the Citadel of the Moon."

So, pointing out to Ahmed a gateway of polished stone behind which was a rock-hewn ladder, he farewelled him and sailed away on the Midnight Sea.

Ahmed unlocked the gate with his star-shaped key and set his feet on the ladder of rock, climbing upward and ever upward until below him he could see the snow-capped peaks of mountains and the silvery beds of water-courses gleaming in the light of the stars.

Now he heard the noisy flapping of wings above him and climbed toward the sound, coming at length above the clouds and finding there—upborne on pillars like unto columns of pearl—a stable carved from rock-crystal that shone against the starlit heavens as it were a stupendous hollowed opal.

To the right of him, as he entered the stable, he saw a horse of surpassing grace and beauty. It was snow-white of color and its wings were silver in the starlight and it nibbled its food with dainty enjoyment. So Ahmed knew it for the horse the Old Man of the Sea had designated.

He mounted the winged horse and plunged with him into the soft bosom of a fleecy cloud, and the winged horse soared upward on the long pathway of the sky that led to the Citadel of the Moon.

* * * * *

THE SIXTH MOON

While it was thus and thus with Ahmed, this following was the case of the Mongol Prince:

There served him in his Palace of Ho Sho a court magician who was fierce of eye and foul of face. His hands were like unto raven's claws and, when he opened his mouth, he was shown to be toothless, save for one only tooth.

There was none any baser nor more wrongous than this court magician, nor was he ashamed of any shameful deed he wrought.

By reason of his black magic, he knew the secret shrine that sheltered a golden tree.

If left to propagate for a myriad years, this tree would bear fruit for the healing of the diseases of the world, but to pluck untimely the single golden apple which

it now bore could check forever the growth of the tree.

Yet did the court magician not scruple, but told his lord the secret of the tree and, without more ado, the Prince of the Mongols, taking the base magician with him, set sail for the Island of Wak.

This island was in shape like unto a crescent moon and a wide river ran to the heart of it where lay a fishing village. The people of the village knew not that their meagre shops and dwelling concealed a secret shrine.

The Prince of the Mongols sailed down the river to the heart of it and directed his court magician to violate the sanctuary of the magic apple.

By reading the cryptic writings on one wall and another and adding together the sum of their meanings, the magician came unto a carven head like the head of a man which gave way under the pressure of his hand.

As it gave way it thereby made to open a circled panel and admitted the magician into the Hall of Many Overlapping Shadows at the end whereof there grew the sacred tree.

In the midst of the shining golden branches of the tree, there grew in singleness the golden fruit that contained the seed of the healing of the diseases of the world, and it shone with a great sheen.

So without ruth for the unborn generations that would never know the healing of the fruit of the tree, the magician reached out his hands like raven's claws and plucked the single apple.

He carried the apple into the light of day and held it up that his master, the Mongol Prince, might see it.

Now the Mongol Prince bethought him of plan to put the apple to the proof.

His court magician carried in his hand the staff of his calling. The rod of it was long and hollow and the top was a hollow globe of golden filigree. In the hollow of the rod was a poisonous viper and, when a spring released it, this viper would thrust its horrid fangs through the network of the filigree.

At the water's edge a fisherman was cleaning his day's catch and intent upon his work.

The Mongol Prince signaled to the magician.

"Test the power of the magic apple on that fisherman," he said.

So the magician loosed the spring that set free the viper from the hollow rod and sent a runner to apply its fangs to the bared shoulder of the fisherman.

Carrying the staff at arm's length, the runner obeyed the mandate and the sting of the viper penetrated the flesh of the fisherman so that he fell to the ground, writhing in convulsions and becoming black as he were an Ethiopian.

Whereupon the Mongol Prince watched his twistings and turnings with sinister interest and the magician, in malignant enjoyment, displayed his single tooth in cruel laughter.

When it was plain that the fisherman had but one moment of life remaining, the Mongol Prince signaled the magician to apply the magic of the apple, and, when he had done so, the fisherman was restored to his natural color and health came back to him, so that he sprang to his feet and ran away in terror of he knew not what.

The magician delivered up the magic apple to the Mongol Prince and, mindful of what his spies had reported to him, the Prince did say:

"This apple is far rarer than India's crystal or Persia's carpet."

So he summoned a runner and said to him:

"Haste you to Bagdad. At the end of the sixth moon, give order that the Princess be done slowly to death by poison."

And they sailed away from that place.

* * * * *

On this wise, as has been related, it happened to the three Princes:

For Prince of Persia, his Awaker bought a flying rug and he said, "This is the greatest rarity in the world."

For the Prince of the Indies, a driven slave obtained a magic crystal and he said, "This is the greatest rarity in the world."

For the Prince of the Mongols, his court magician wrested from its shrine the magical apple and he said, "This is the greatest rarity in the world."

* * * * *

But Ahmed:

Far up the pathway of the sky he had fared, day following day. Tirelessly the winged horse had spurned the air with flying feet. Now, on the upper side of a cloud-bank he came to halt upon the cloud-borne base of a flight of a thousand steps.

When, of his own volition, the winged horse floated to this high-built landing-place, then Ahmed knew that he was nearing the end of his long quest.

With fast-beating heart and an exalted hope he scarce dared hope, he dismounted from his snow-white steed.

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When, of his own volition, the winged horse floated to this high-built landing-place, then Ahmed knew that he was nearing the end of his long quest.

With fast-beating heart and an exalted hope he scarce dared hope, he dismounted from his snow-white steed.

Above him the steps rose in silvered splendor toward the far Citadel of the Moon, and he set his feet on the first step to begin his ascent to that far-shining silver dome. Now for incalculable ages a magic chest had been suspended under the silver dome of the Citadel of the Moon. Here it awaited its rightful heritor.

For incalculable ages the guardian of this magic chest had waited for the sound of a footstep on the silver stairs. When Ahmed's foot touched the first step, this guardian of the chest sprang to wakefulness.

Ahmed's gaze, uplifted toward the glittering brightness of the citadel, encountered a misty shape, appearing through the silvery translucence of the stairway—a figure in size like unto a child yet with the face of an aged man and with a long beard whose silvery whiteness trailed the ground. His eyes were keen and discerning and he regarded Ahmed with a wise prescience born of his long vigil.

Ahmed's face wore the light of lofty purpose—such a light as if it came from the sea-like deeps of a thrice-tested soul.

Seeing which, the guardian of the chest made of his hands a trumpet to carry his voice that was rusty from ages of disuse and he shouted to Ahmed:

"Advance, adventurous traveler! The magic chest is wrapped about in a cloak of invisibility."

Without further word he mantled himself in mist and disappeared through the silvery translucence of the stairs.

Then Ahmed climbed upward to the silvery dome and entered the pillared hall beneath it. When his eyes were accustomed to the silvery whiteness of the pillars, he saw against them a spinning shadow.

He thrust his hand into the spinning shadow and lo! there hung on his wrist a cloak whose iridescence shamed the stars. Suspended where the spinning shadows had been, a silver chest gladdened his eyes.

In all humility Ahmed stretched forth his hand.

Because he was its rightful heritor, the silver chest yielded to his grasp and fitted itself to the palm of his hand.

His heart overflowed with gratitude. His soul expanded. He felt within himself the power to do good, to make amends for all his grievous past.

Far below he saw the glimmer of wings and knew that the winged horse would carry him back to the borders of the Land of Dread Adventure.

* * * * *

Thus fared it with Ahmed, but in Bagdad:

Mongol soldiers, under guise of porters bearing gifts, had entered the city gates from time to time. At the end of the sixth moon, others of them came and, among them, the runner sent by the Prince of the Mongols.

This runner, having secret speech with the Wielder of the Royal Ink-Brush, gave him the mandate that his lord had sent, which mandate the Wielder of the Ink-Brush passed on to the Mongol slave girl who was in the service of the Princess.

So the Mongol slave kept stealthy watch on the Princess until she saw her to be rapt in contemplation of the sands of fate and oblivious of her surroundings.

Then did the Mongol slave, screening her actions with the movements of a huge fan, sprinkle a powder in a center where burned fragrant lign-aloes and ambergris. Fumes of the powder rose from the censer and with the fan she waved them toward the Princess.

Overcome by the fumes from the center, the Princess sank in a stupor against the cushions of her divan, and when the Mongol maid saw that she was unconscious she dropped between her lips the poison draught even as the Mongol Prince had commanded.

Then with loud and continuous crying she fled from the room screaming aloud that her mistress had been reading the sands on the sand board and had swooned in terror of what she had read there.

So slaves came running from every part of the Palace and the Caliph came also and the most notable physicians of the realm were summoned and the Princess, lying where they had placed her on her bed, recovered from her stupor only to writhe in agony from the torment of the poison draught.

* * * * *

And, at the same time, according as they had predetermined, the three Princes met again at the Caravansary of the Towering Rock in the Desert.

Each displayed to the others the rarity he had brought and each spake urbanely of the other's treasure the while he secretly believed his own the rarest.

So the Persian Prince advised that they haste to Bagdad and he moved toward his camel-train and the Indian Prince moved to mount his elephant.

Then did the Mongol Prince say craftily:

"O Prince of the Indies, discover this with thy crystal. Does the Princess await us as she pledged?"

He spake thus because he knew what he knew.

Then did the Indian Prince take the magic crystal in his two hands and hold it before him so that all of them might look therein and, when they peered into the crystal, each said:

"We would see the Princess."

And when they had said this, behold, there appeared in the crystal the sleeping-chamber of the Princess and the Princess writhing in agony and her women wailing about her bedside and the learned doctors debating and the Caliph buffeting his face in the extremity of his grief.

When they saw this, each Prince was affected according to the workings of his own mind, for the Persian and the Indian bethought them of the magnificent city of Bagdad, its high walls, its palaces, its pavilions and gardens, its bazaars and the riches of its treasury, and of the Caliph's word that all this should go to the suitor who won the Princess.

And the Mongol Prince knew what was in the heart of each of the other Princes and felicitated himself for his wily artifice, thinking how he would prove his gift the rarest.

Quoth the Persian Prince: "Make ready the flying carpet."

Quoth the Mongol Prince blandly: "With the magic apple we may save her life."

Then the Awaker and his attendants made ready the flying carpet and the three Princes sat thereon and the Awaker told them the magic signs that would make it go where they would have it, and it rose high in the air and floated away, the while the servants of the caravansary and the other travelers sojourning there watched it with marvel in their breasts.

* * * * *

On this wise it was with the three Princes, but the Princess:

One after another the great physicians of the realm had looked upon her and turned away, helpless to give aidance.

There came one more, the greatest of them all, the learned Zakariya of Kufa.

"Canst thou do aught?" the Caliph pleaded.

The physician made the sign of negation.

"I can do naught," he said. "She has but one moment to live."

Then did every head bow low and every eye suffuse with tears, the while the Caliph beat upon his breast and wailed in the sorest of sorrow.

There came a sound as of the onrush of many leaves before a gale and, from the direction of that sound, there flew into the room, seated on the magical carpet, the Prince of the Indies, the Prince of Persia and the Prince of the Mongols.

As the rug settled to the floor, the three Princes rose forthright and came toward the bedside, terrifying the handmaidens and the eunuchs and affronting the Caliph who fain would have driven the intruders away in anger.

The Mongol Prince lifted his hand with calm authority, checking outbursts of fear or anger. He approached the bedside and held the magical apple close to the dying Princess.

While all watched in fearsome awe, he continued to hold the apple close to her lips until her breath became even, the color came back to her pale cheeks, her eyes opened, bright with health and vigor, and she sat up in her bed stretching forth her arms to her father, who enfolded her in his embrace while joyance reigned, and the Mongol maid smiled a sly smile as of one who knew what she knew.

* * * * *

While it was thus and thus in Bagdad, it was in this wise with Ahmed:

The winged horse had carried him the long leagues that lay between the Citadel of the Moon and the Defile that gave ingress to the Mountains of Dread Adventure. Now it was come to the borders of its own land, and, alighting, it waited for Ahmed to dismount. Which, when he had done, it soared away to its abode in the skies.

The Hermit of the Defile came to meet Ahmed and when he saw the silver chest he carried, the Hermit made low obeisance to him, saying:

"No one can carry the magic chest save its rightful heritor. Thou hast earned the power to do good, beyond which there is no higher happiness."

And he made the salaam of honor again, but Ahmed lifted him to his feet and would have farewelled him, because that he was in haste to return to Bagdad by the seventh moon.

"Thou canst not get to thy journey's end in time if thou dost walk," the hermit said. "Do this and this with the seeds in thy magic chest."

Ahmed did as the Hermit guided him and, when he had thrown a seed and another and another, behold he had a caparisoned horse to ride and garments silver-shining to wear and bread wherewith to allay his hunger.

So, farewelling the Hermit, he mounted his steed and rode toward Bagdad through the night.

* * * * *

Now the Princess, thinking back upon the violence of her malady, marveled to find herself restored, and she spake thus to her father:

"My father, I was at the portals of death and now I glow with health. What miracle is this?"

Then, while the Mongol maid smiled her sly smile of hidden knowledge, the Prince of the Mongols addressed the Princess:

"'Twas I who brought you back," he told her. No other gift can match my golden apple."

And he made gift to her of the magical apple of healing.

But the Indian Prince was seething with rage.

"The Mongol makes rash claim," he told the Princess. "'Twas this rare crystal disclosed your desperate plight."

And he laid in her hand the magic crystal.

Then the Persian Prince came forward in high excitement.

"A fig for their pretensions," he said. "My magic carpet brought us here. By the beard of the Prophet, it is rarest!"

And he laid at her feet the magic carpet.

Then, while the heart of the Princess contracted within her for that her liking for these Princes had in nowise increased during their absence, they did enter into argument, one with another, saying each to the others:

"Her life belongs to me!"

"To me!"

"To me!"

So the Caliph went unto them to make peace among them.

The Princess, bewildered by their much talking and fearful of what the future held in store for her, sat among her cushions brooding dejectedly.

But the little Slave of the Sand Board crept close to the magic crystal and peered therein, saying within herself:

"I would see Ahmed."

Choking back the cry that rose to her lips when she saw what she saw, she signaled her mistress to look, whispering:

"He cometh! He cometh!"

The Princess gazed, then pressed her hand to her heart to still its joyous throbbing.

For seen in the crystal, riding toward her, with valiant head upflung, was her Prince of lovers, Ahmed, the master of her heart. Aloft he held the magic silver chest and his face was radiant with the joy of accomplishment.

The Mongol slave girl, ever watchful, read in the eyes of the Princess the hope that was hers, and crept secretly from the room that she might bring the matter before the Wielder of the Ink-Brush.

Pondering in her heart how she might work delay, the Princess once more attended on the wrangling of the Princes.

"She is mine—nay mine—nay mine!" was the burden of their crying.

Said the Caliph finally:

"It is for me to decide which gift is rarest."

Then the Princess spoke:

"A moment, O Princes. Who can say which gift is rarest?"

They turned toward her in amazement.

"Without the crystal," she continued, "you could not have known. Without the carpet you could not have come. Without the apple you could not have cured me. Apple—crystal—carpet. No one of them is rarest. Each had been useless without the other two."

The Prince of Persia listened, open-mouthed.

The Prince of the Indies glowered.

The Prince of the Mongols would have contended further, but the Caliph lifted a peremptory hand.

"Cease!" he commanded. "There's wisdom here. 'Tis best that we deliberate."

Now the Wielder of the Ink-Brush, having heard what the Mongol maid had to tell him, came to the door of the sleeping chamber and he listened there until the contention had reached this point, then he wormed himself into the room and slyly whispered to the Mongol Prince:

"Bide your time. You have twenty thousand troops within the walls."

So the Mongol Prince, covering up his crafty malice with suave courtesy, spake smoothly to the Caliph:

"Yourself hath said it. 'Tis best that we deliberate."

And save the Princess and her handmaidens all went forth from thence.

* * * * *

Now the light of the sun departed and, black and deep, the night let down its veil of gloom. The clanging together of Bagdad's steel-toothed gates served notice on the world that none might enter there.

The portcullis of the Palace dropped with a thud.

In Palace, homes of wealth and humble dwellings, peace, security and well-being reigned after the bitter grief and mourning of the day. All hearts rejoiced for that their Princess had been recovered from mortal malady.

None walked the streets save here and there a sleepy night-guard.

Night reached its noon.

With bold and arrogant step, the Mongol Prince and the Wielder of the Ink-Brush came out upon the battlements of the Palace even as they had aforetime planned.

Their greedy gaze encompassed all the silent, tranquil town.

The Prince rubbed his hands together in avaricious glee, and signaled his henchman to set to moving their well-considered plan to steal the city.

Then from this lofty place the henchman thrice waved a lighted cresset.

From minarets and balconies and walls flambeaux flashed answers to him until the flaming word had gone twice around the great circle of the city.

Then instantly the paved streets replied.

In the shadowy embrasure of a wall a nodding beggar flung aside his rags, unwound his filthy turban and came forth an armed soldier in the black livery of the Mongols. From a thousand shadowy corners a thousand nodding beggars did the same.

Porters who seemed asleep among their bundles shed hastily the kaftans that hid their soldiers' garb. Tall earthen jars disgorged men in full armor.

From every lane and alley came thousands more, fitting their blades to handles and lengthening jointed lances to their length.

For every company officers appeared to form the men in ranks and files.

Like swarms of vast black beetles the Mongol army overflowed the town.

Forth from their homes the townspeople came running at the sound of all the turmoil. So sudden—so unlooked-for was the coming of this evil thing upon them that nowhere could resistance crystallize.

Night-guards were slain. Townspeople were herded into narrow courts and houses and warned against appearing in the streets.

All this the watchful Mongol Prince found to his liking and gloated in stiff-necked pride.

Ahmed, on the desert, all unknowing, rode toward Bagdad.

A guard upon the Palace wall, stabbed in the back, fell to the ground, and, at the signal, Mongol troops swarmed up the walls and overran the Palace.

They trussed the Palace attendants—Nubians and eunuchs—with thongs and threw them into corners. They drove the Caliph, the Indian Prince and the Prince of Persia to a prison cell.

The frightened Princess, clinging in terror to her handmaidens, beheld her very sleeping-chamber invaded by Mongol guards.

And when the streets of Bagdad—silent once again but with a silence threatening as death—were empty save for Mongol soldiers marching in ordered ranks on every street, the Mongol Prince and his henchman once more overlooked the city with greedy, gloating gaze. Making low obeisance, the henchman said:

"Bagdad, O Celestial Majesty, is yours."

And satisfied, they went from thence into the Palace.

* * * * *

When morning came: Ahmed, all unknowing of what had taken place in Bagdad, paused at a desert well to make ablution and pray the dawn prayer.

When morning came: The Mongol Prince, comfortably ensconced upon the throne of Bagdad, ordered that the Princess be fetched before him. Benumbed by all the untoward happenings of the night, she came. Once more the cup of joy had been dashed from her lips. The hope aroused by the magic crystal was drowned in despair. Unprotestingly she heard the Mongol Prince command her to prepare at once for marriage to him and, silent—numbed—she was led away.

When morning came: The Wielder of the Ink-Brush visited the Caliph and the Princes in their cell and told of the approaching nuptials of his Prince and the Princess—adding, with sardonic glee:

"Ye shall add joy to the wedding festival by being boiled in oil."

And fumes of boiling oil rose from a cauldron to their prison window.

When morning came: Villagers, going to Bagdad's marts for trade, found the gates closed, learned of the state within and fled the way they had come.

Some of these fleeing folk found Ahmed at the desert well and, to his questions, told him that Bagdad had fallen into the hands of the Mongols, then marveled that instead of joining them, he mounted his pawing steed to haste away toward Bagdad.

So, while the Princess paced the floor in agony of spirit, Ahmed rode madly up to the outer gates of Bagdad and hailed the jeering Mongol guard upon the wall.

"Open wide the gates of Bagdad," Ahmed demanded.

"They're closed by Cham Shang's orders," gibed the guard.

Then Ahmed's soul expanded. Could he save Bagdad to its ruler and its people, he would have paid for grievous deeds of old.

He opened wide his magic chest.

With free, wide gesture he flung its seeds broadcast.

The Mongol guards on the battlemented walls watched, fascinated.

And save the Princess and her handmaidens all went forth from thence.

Beneath them there appeared—out of nothingness—five score of shining soldiers, silver-garbed.

Once more the hand of Ahmed flashed its sowing motion—and then again—and once again. The guards lost count.

With every movement of that supple wrist, the shining army grew until it spread and filled the whole wide plain, from side to side and far away, as far as eye could reach.

Stark panic seized the Mongol soldiers. With one accord they fled the wall, shouting warnings to their fellows in the town.

From throat to throat the amazing tidings rang:

"Fly for your lives—fly for your lives—a great magician comes! He summons armies from the earth itself!"

And echoing back from every wall and dome:

"Fly for your lives—your lives—your lives!"

So to the Mongol Prince upon the throne his henchman came and shouted:

"A magic army, a hundred thousand strong, surrounds the walls. Thy troops have fled."

"Set my guards at the Palace gates," the desperate Prince made answer, and fled to find a place where he might hide.

Out from their homes came the townspeople, rejoiced to see the Mongol hosts in flight. Up to the walls they came and opened wide the gates to their deliverer.

Drums of glad tidings were beaten, bannerols and standards were unfurled, with shouts of joy the townsfolk saw the steel-toothed gates unclose.

Full panoplied in shining silver, the magic hosts came through. Like a stream of white lava they poured through the town. Ahmed rode at their head.

On every hand the people shouted praise, hailing him as one who came in peace to restore family to family, homes to rightful owners, a city to its founders.

From street to street the white-clad army moved, the people crowding with them.

Within the Palace the Mongol Prince darted hither and thither like a trapped animal.

Came a runner to him, kneeling in trembling fear and saying:

"Great Khan, every way of escape is blocked."

"Then will I die," he shouted and bared his neck, commanding that the runner strike off his head.

But ere the fatal blade descended the Mongol slave girl, artful to the last, halted the runner's hand.

"There is a way," she told the Prince. "The flying carpet. On that you can escape and take the Princess with you."

From behind a curtain the Slave of the Lute peered wondering—then—when she heard the crafty Mongol speak, her face blanched with horror and she fled to the streets, plowing her way through the crowds to bear to Ahmed word of the peril of the Princess.

But the Mongol Prince made haste to the sleeping-chamber of the Princess and gave order to the guards stationed there to spread the magic rug. Then with a look of cunning and desire his gaze encompassed the Princess.

At a signal, a guard dragged away her handmaiden, and the Princess was alone with her tormentors. She fled before them. The Prince pursued her.

To Ahmed, riding at the head of his army, came the Slave of the Lute, breathless and terrified, and told him of the Princess' plight—the dangers that surrounded her.

Shouting orders for the army to follow him, Ahmed ran fleetly to the Palace.

At the Palace gates the Mongol guard repulsed him, but with quick decision he flung about his head the cloak of invisibility and where he had stood there was naught but empty air, albeit a spinning shadow dazzled their eyes.

The startled guards gasped in dismay. About the entrance to the tunnel of the tigers a dozen of them fell. The door into the tunnel opened and closed.

Within the Palace, the Mongol Prince and his henchman harried the Princess from room to room. At length they trapped her in a narrow corridor.

Her eager spirit failed. Bereft of hope, she swooned.

They lifted her and placed her on the rug.

His henchman stood at her feet and the Mongol Prince, at her head, made the magic passes that would lift the rug. They braced themselves for the uprush.

Then—they saw nothing, they heard nothing—but they felt the impact of a lithe and muscular body. Spinning like teetotums under the blow, they toppled and measured their lengths upon the floor.

Then—open-mouthed with amaze—they beheld the Princess lifted aloft by unseen hands and carried up the stairway from the room.

Determined to possess her, the Mongols stumbled to their feet and followed after.

Below them, in the adjoining room, Ahmed had thrown off his cloak, and in proper person, held the unconscious Princess in his arms.

The Mongol Prince drew sword to take the intruder's life.

Bent upon reviving the Princess, Ahmed knew not his peril but, ere the blow could fall, his white-clad troops invaded the room and swept the Mongols from his path and Ahmed never knew what vengeance dire the eunuchs and the Nubians wreaked upon these wretched conspirators.

The Princess opened her weary eyes, but kept them fixed on space for that she feared they would encounter some new danger.

But Ahmed's tender gaze pierced her consciousness. She looked and thrilled and looked again. Heart spake to heart. Arms that had ached with emptiness reached each to each.

Then came the grateful court—intent on rendering thanks to him who had rescued them from a horrid fate.

The Caliph with glad goodwill bestowed the Princess on her lover and their deliverer.

Then, again, the reunited lovers would have clasped each other in arms of love, but the Caliph, the Princess and the court dignitaries must say over and over their phrases of fervent gratitude.

It was too much.

The happy Princess whispered, "Let's away."

Ahmed bethought him of his magic cloak. He flung it around them both.

The people of the court caught the twinkle of fleeing feet and followed after.

The twinkling feet came on the flying rug.

Ahmed dropped the cloak and—when the grateful court came near—he made the sign that lifted up the rug.

Waving happy farewells the lovers floated away on the magic carpet, out over the heads of the doting populace shouting and waving from the streets below, over Bagdad's towering walls and minarets and domes, into the solitude beyond the clouds—then, lip to lip and heart to heart, up toward the stars that, clustering, twinkled:

HAPPINESS MUST BE EARNED.

"—adventures of princes aid stories
of lover-folk enslaved by love."

APR 23 1924 /

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THE THIEF OF BAGDAD

Photoplay in 14 reels

Story by Elton Thomas

Directed by Raoul Walsh

Author of the Photoplay (under Section 62)
Douglas Fairbanks of the U.S.

APR 23 1924



*Douglas
Fairbanks*
in
'The THIEF OF BAGDAD'

F. MURRAY
GREEN

PRICE **25** CENTS

Personnel of the Douglas Fairbanks Company During the Production of "The Thief of Bagdad"

Elton Thomas..... Author
Raoul Walsh..... Director
Arthur Edson..... Photographer
Lotta Woods..... Scenario Editor
Dr. Arthur Woods..... Research Director
Edward Knoblock..... Consultant
Richard Holahan..... } Associate Photographers
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Albert Wayne..... Master Electrician
Charles Warrington..... Still Photographer
Howard MacChesney..... }
Clinton Newman..... } Technicians
Walter Pallman..... }
J. C. Watson..... }

The Players

The Thief of Bagdad..... Douglas Fairbanks
His Evil Associate..... Snitz Edwards
The Holy Man..... Charles Belcher
The Princess..... Julianne Johnston
The Mongol Slave..... Anna May Wong
The Slave of the Lute..... Winter-Blossom
The Slave of the Sand Board..... Etta Lee
The Caliph..... Brandon Hurst
His Soothsayer..... Tote Du Crow
The Mongol Prince..... So-Jin
His Counselor..... K. Nambu
His Court Magician..... Sadakichi Hartmann
The Indian Prince..... Noble Johnson
The Persian Prince..... M. Comont
His Awaker..... Charles Stevens
The Swordsman..... Sam Baker
The Eunuchs..... }
 } Jess Weldon
 } Scott Matraw
 } Charles Sylvester

Prefatory—

THERE is a touch of the fantastic even in the reason I made the "The Thief of Bagdad"—for it is a reason impelled by the unseen. It is a tribute to the fineness that I believe underlies the workaday philosophy of men; a recognition of the inner forces that belie the sordidness of Life.

There can be no doubt that the human soul's reaching for finer, higher, more ethereal things is intuitive and first manifests itself in a child's love of fairy tales and fantasy.

The dreams, longings and roseate ambitions of childhood are relegated to the background of Life by the struggle of existence, but stifling them doesn't kill them. They persist throughout the years. There are moments when we all "dream dreams."

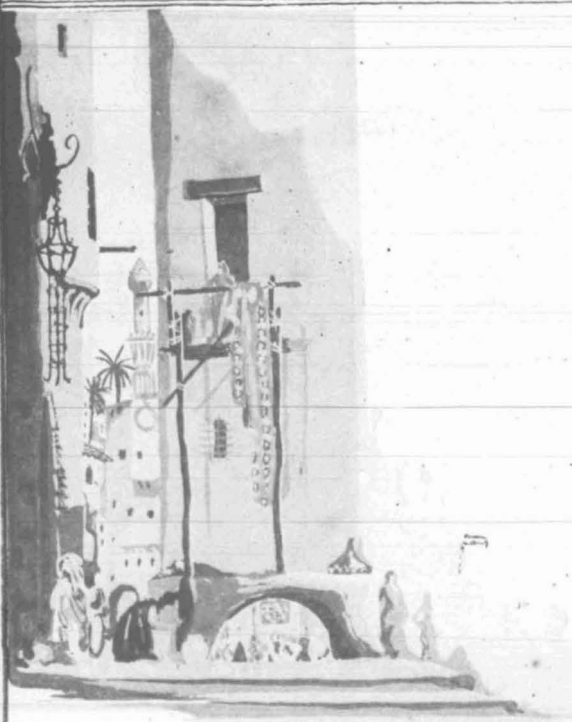
Imagery is inherent in the human breast. The brave deeds, the longing for better things, the striving for finer thoughts, the mental pictures of obstacles overcome and successes won are nearer to our real selves than our daily grind of earthly struggle.

"The Thief of Bagdad" is the story of the things we dream about; a tale of what happens when we go out from ourselves to conquer Worlds of Fancy. We set out to win our Heart's Desire; we confuse our enemies; we demean ourselves bravely; our success is complete; our reward is Happiness.

I believe that this is the story of every man's inner self and that every man will thus see it.

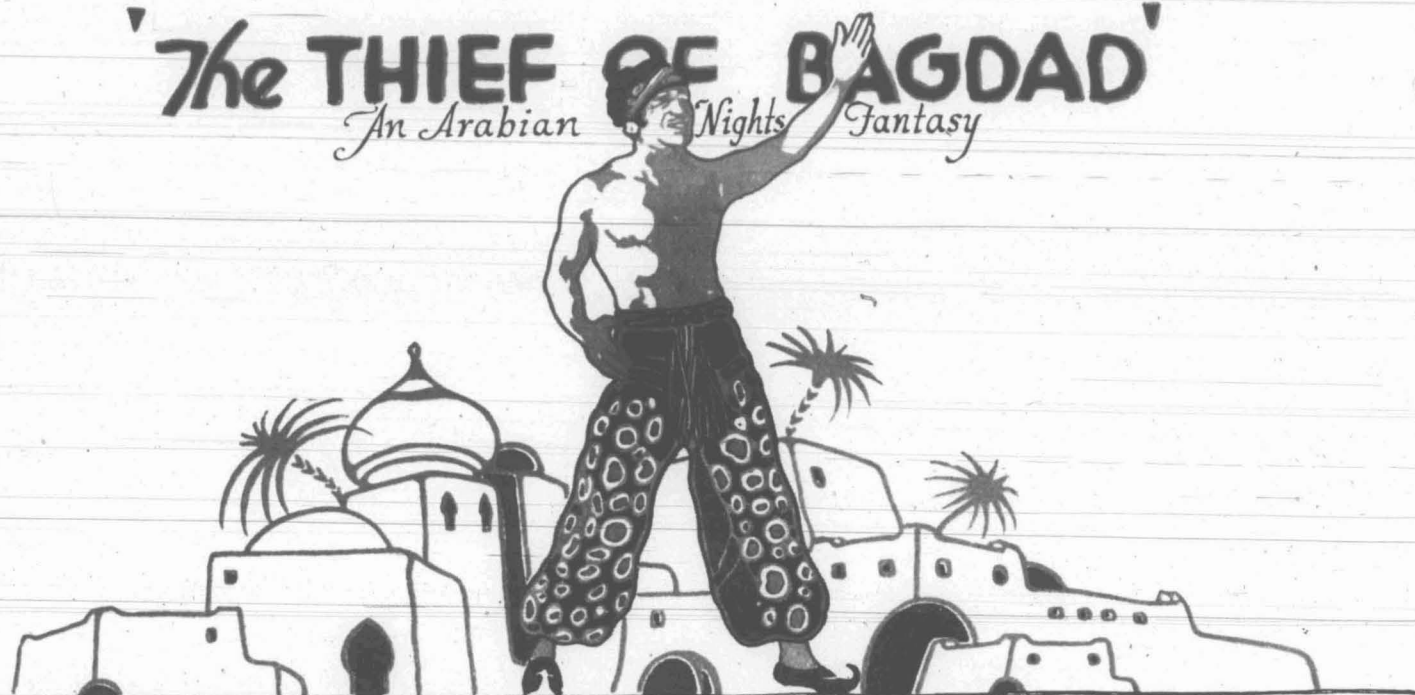
That's the reason I made "The Thief of Bagdad."

Douglas Fairbanks



'The THIEF OF BAGDAD'

An Arabian Nights Fantasy



As played by DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

Written for the Screen by ELTON THOMAS * * * *Retold in Story form by* LOTTA WOODS



AGAINST the velvet blackness of the desert sky, the low-hanging stars gleam in brilliant points of light. Below, picked out by their light, is a lonely group. A Holy Man drones over and over again the lesson he is teaching to a little, brown-skinned, naked boy. The child listens, his eyes fixed on the stars, until it seems to him that the very stars themselves spell out in star clusters the words of the lesson: "Happiness Must Be Earned."

Bagdad, magic city of the East, lay dreaming in the sunshine of a thousand years ago and, from far-off kingdoms, three Princes turned their greedy eyes thereto.

For thus the word had gone forth: A moon hence may suitors come from all the East to seek in marriage the hand of Bagdad's royal Princess.

The word came to the Kingdom of the Mongols and to, India and to Persia and to the Princes thereof, and these Princes wholly resolved to win the Princess, departed each from his own kingdom.

Now, on this same day, Ahmed, a thief of Bagdad, pursued his nimble-fingered way and, as fruit of his dishonest calling, there came to his hand a magic rope.

Escaping from the owner of the rope, Ahmed made use of its magic powers to climb to a nearby window and found himself within the walls of a mosque. Never before in all his life had he set foot in a mosque.

Within, a Holy Man expounded his doctrine.

Ahmed listened. For a moment he was confounded by this, his first contact with Good, but he recovered himself and flouted the Holy Man with rude gesturing, loudly shouting the tenets of his own creed:

"I see what I want—and I take it. Paradise is a fool's dream and Allah is a myth."

Then unchecked by the Holy Man, he flung himself from the mosque and came in time to his own evil den where he lived with one other, a Bird of Evil who fawned upon him to share his loot.

"Behold this rope," said Ahmed. "It is a magic rope. With it we can scale the highest walls."

A moon waxed and waned.

Through Bagdad's gates a train of laden porters came. They bore rare trappings for the Palace and viands to feast the suitors who, on the morrow, would come to sue for the hand of the Princess.

Ahmed, the thief, and Bird of Evil, creeping from their den, beheld this wealth pass by and joined them to the end of the train hoping thereby to win an entrance to the Palace.

Repulsed, they whispered cunningly together and marked the high wall of the Palace with the sign of Ahmed.

"To-night," they said, "with the magic rope."

That night Ahmed and Bird of Evil came to the foot of the

Palace wall and Bird of Evil waited below while Ahmed, by the aid of the magic rope, surmounted the wall and made entry to the Palace. Once inside, he moved stealthily about until he came into a treasure room.

There, as he burrowed in a chest of jewels, his hand was stayed by the tinkle of soft music. Forgetting his rope, he followed the sound. It led him to a room where—but just left by her slaves—the Princess lay asleep under a canopy of silken gauze.

He looked—went away—came back and looked again. Vainly he tried to drag himself back to the treasure chest. Finally he found himself close to the couch of the sleeping Princess, crouched there, listening to her soft breathing. Discarding indifferently the string of priceless pearls he had brought from the treasure room, he picked up one of the tiny slippers that still bore the warm impress of the Princess' foot. He examined it with curious interest.

Then, a strange new thrill. The Princess moved in her sleep and her slender white hand fell athwart the rough brown fist of the thief. Gently he moved to disengage it. The Princess was roused. She tossed aside her silken coverlet and it fell across his huddled form, hiding him from discovery through all the hubbub of alarm that followed.

Only one person—a Mongol slave girl—glimpsed him and she was silenced by the threat of his dagger. So he escaped, without his magic rope, whose loss troubled him not at all, and bearing with him the little silken slipper, his only booty save the memory of the Princess' loveliness.

Next day the Princess came with her slave girls to a high pavilion which overlooked the courtyard of the Palace. It was the Princess' birthday and suitors were coming from all the East. The robbery of the night before was forgotten in the excitement of this new interest.

The fluttering Princess bade a slave girl to read her fortune in the sand tables whose sands had been fetched from Mecca itself.

Blown gently by the breath of the sand reader, the sands shaped a rose.

The Slave of the Sand Board expounded the meaning thereof.

"Whoso of thy suitors first toucheth the rose-tree in the Palace courtyard, he will be thy husband," she said.

The Mongol slave girl, noting the deep interest the Princess evinced in this prophecy slipped furtively away.

The Princess mused over her fortune.

All that morning had Ahmed, the thief, brooded over the little silken slipper of the Princess, neglecting to follow his usual calling. Like a lodestone the slipper had drawn him to the Palace and, high up in a perch of leaves and vines that overlooked the pavilion of the Princess, he secretly watched the lovely maiden of his dreams.

Bird of Evil, trailing him, found him in his hidden refuge. He read in the thief's brooding eyes the secret of his heart. With sly hints and innuendos he pointed out to Ahmed that even a Princess might be stolen if one were master of craft and knew the secrets of subtle drugs that drowsed.

Cupidity shone again in the eyes of the thief and he and his companion climbed down from their perch bent on finding a way into the Palace.

The throb of a huge drum gave warning to the Princess that suitors were at the Palace gates, and, from her high vantage point, she watched them as they came. Scarce did she breathe as each drew near the rose-tree.

There came the glowering Indian Prince—proud and haughty.

Praise Allah, he touched not the rose-tree.

The Persian, fat and gross and sleepy, followed after.

He, too, failed to touch the rose-tree, and the Princess breathed freely again.

Now came the Mongol—cold and impassive. The Princess, frozen with dread, watched his progress with painful interest.

Close on the heels of the Mongol Prince came another.

He was announced as "Ahmed, Prince of the Isles, of the Seas, and of the Seven Palaces." In contrast to the luxury and state of the others, he came with one attendant, a pigmy fellow in clothes many times too large for him.

But the garments of Ahmed lacked naught of splendor for they had been pilfered from the richest bazaars of Bagdad.

The Mongol Prince watched this new arrival with suspicion, but his attention was diverted by the voice of the Mongol slave girl addressing him in his own tongue.

From behind a lattice she whispered to him furtively that the superstitions of the Princess were centered on the rose-tree.

To the Princess, the coming of the Prince of the Seas seemed a reprieve. She watched his progress in simple state and her eyes shone and she prayed within her heart that he might be the first to touch the rose-tree.

Then her face blanched with horror. She shrank against the parapet, trembling and unnerved.

The Mongol Prince was walking with grave deliberation toward the rose-bush. He was reaching forth his hand to pluck a rose.

Strange is the way of destiny!

A bee, disturbed in its meal, flew from the rose and menaced the out-stretched hand of the Mongol Prince. Brushing it aside with his fan, he set its course directly toward Ahmed. Its sharp sting pierced the sensitive ear of Ahmed's spirited horse. The animal sprang unexpectedly from the ground and tossed its unprepared rider straight into the heart of the rose-tree.

Ahmed, none the worse for his experience, descended from the bush bearing in his hand a rose he had plucked in his flight.

So quickly was the whole incident over that none save two had witnessed it, the Mongol Prince and the peeping Princess. The angered and suspicious Mongol went his way into the Palace but the princess clasped her hands to her beating heart in an ecstasy of joy.

In the pageantry of the Prince's entrance to the Palace, the Prince of the Seas slipped unnoticed into the garden under the Princess' pavilion. He drenched the rose with the drug of drowsiness and, unseen by the Palace attendants, he climbed to the pavilion.

The maiden in love is always a sweet compound of modesty and boldness. The Princess saw in Ahmed, "The Prince of the Seas," the suitor chosen for her by Allah and the rose he offered her seemed a precious omen.

With shy delight she showed him the rose shaped in the sands and, as she explained its mystic meaning, her soft white fingers fell once more athwart his rough brown hand.

Once more he knew that sweet wild thrill.

Breathless with the urge of it, he pressed a kiss upon her hand and, in a moment, they were in each other's arms, conscious of naught save the exquisite fervor of their love.

Ahmed scarce knew with what dissembling he regained possession of the drenched rose and made his departure from the pavilion. He was aware only of an overpowering desire to flee from a place where he did not belong—from a sensation for which he was unfit.

He looked about dazedly for an opportunity to escape from the garden but he was engulfed in the machinery of state and borne along to the throne room. Here, according to the age-long custom of her House and the will of her high-born father, the Princess was to indicate her choice among her suitors.

Ahmed was scarce recovered from his daze when the ring of choice was pressed upon his finger by the chief eunuch.

Overcome with the shame of his imposition, Ahmed detached himself from the Caliph's train and stood alone in the great hall from whence the others had gone to the feast room.

As he stood there pondering how he might reach the Princess, the Mongol slave girl passed him with a stare of recognition.

So it was that while Ahmed was finding his way to the garden bent on confessing his shame, the Mongol slave searched out the Counselor of the Mongol Prince and told him that this Prince of the Seas was no Prince, but a common thief.

The Counselor reported to his master and the Mongol Prince denounced Ahmed to the Caliph and nobles of Bagdad.

The Princess heard her lover's confession with bewildered amazement—but, through it all, she read the story of his love and his repentance and, at the last, she bade him keep her ring and her love, the while she begged him to flee from the merciless wrath of her father.

But Ahmed would not flee. He was in a mood to expiate his crime and, resisting not, he was dragged before the Caliph.

Because he was a thief he was flogged until he swooned. Because of the trick he had performed against his ruler, he was condemned to be torn asunder by the great ape.

Warned of the punishment to be meted out to him, the Princess bribed the guards to spare his life and, bruised and battered as he was, he was yet set in safety into the dark shadows of the streets.

The Caliph would have compelled the Princess to choose among the real Princes who remained. Urged by the Slave of the Sand Board to forget not the prophecy of the sands, she temporized. She begged her father to leave the matter to chance. "Send them away," she pled. "Let them return at the seventh moon bearing rare treasure. Who brings the rarest, I will wed."

So it was left and so Bird of Evil explained it to Ahmed the next morning. For, when the tigers that were set at night to guard the Palace gates were led away to their daytime quarters, Bird of Evil crawled through their tunnels to the streets and found Ahmed near the Palace wall where he had brooded the night away.

"They will return at the seventh moon," he said. "If you would have the Princess, return with me through these tunnels."

But Ahmed would have none of him, and, when Bird of Evil nagged him through the streets, he took refuge in the same mosque where but yesterday he had flouted the Holy Man.

To the Holy Man he bared his bruised soul and the Holy Man convinced him that on the bedrock of humility he might build a new life.

While Ahmed drank in the teachings of the Holy Man, the Mongol Prince instructed his Counselor to remain in Bagdad, disguised from the recognition of the guards.



"From time to time I will send you men in the guise of porters," he said. "Build me an army within the walls."

And the Princess, turning to the tables of sand for comfort, found that the rose persisted. So she nourished a tiny hope for the future.

The Holy Man brought Ahmed to the gates of the city and set him on the path of his adventures, saying:

"At the end of this way is a silver chest that doth contain the greatest magic. Go forth to seek it. Be brave. Control thy destiny."

Taking from his finger the ring of choice, Ahmed split it into two rings with a stroke of the sword the Holy Man had given him.

"Give this to her who hath already my heart," he told the Holy Man, and went forth alone to test his soul.

At a caravansary in the desert, a day's journey from Bagdad, the three Princes took leave of each other, promising to meet there again at the end of the sixth moon.

The Mongol Prince, with suave courtesy, wished the other good fortune, second only to his own. And ere their trains were well started toward their own countries, he set spies to follow each.

But Ahmed:

He traveled far from Bagdad and came at length to the defile that led to the Mountains of Dread Adventure.

"I seek a magic chest," he told the Hermit there.

The Hermit regarded him speculatively.

"Many have gone this way," he said, "but none returned."

Then he described what dangers dire and manifold, what fires and floods, what ravening beasts and birds, what spirits of earth and sea infested the way.

Yet was Ahmed's resolve firm.

So did the Hermit give him a talisman.

"And thy courage fail not," he said, "thou mayst live to reach the Cavern of Enchanted Trees. Touch with this talisman the midmost tree."

And Ahmed fared onward.

Within the Kingdom where he bade and forbade, the Mongol Prince awaited the reports of his spies.

So came a runner telling him that, while the Persian Prince had slumbered in his litter, his chief attendant had purchased for him in the bazaars of Shiraz a rug of such magical properties that it would carry one through the air whithersoever it was directed. And the fat and torpid Persian Prince was convinced that this rug was the greatest rarity in the world.

Came another runner telling that a driven slave had clambered to the lofty head of a forgotten idol near Kandahar and plucked from its eye-socket a crystal of such magical properties that in it one could see whatsoever he desired to see. And the arrogant and purse-proud Indian Prince for whom this crystal was secured was convinced that it was the greatest rarity in the world.

Then the Mongol Prince smiled a crafty smile and conferred with his court magician, a man of foul favor. And after he had thus conferred, he sailed to the Island of Wak where the court magician wrested from its sacred shrine an apple of such magical properties that it would cure any sickness, no matter how grievous. So, convinced that his treasure was the greatest rarity in the world, the Mongol Prince smiled anew his crafty smile and commanded a runner that he make haste to Bagdad and gave order that at the end of the sixth moon the Princess be given a deadly poison.

This was the case of the three Princes, but as regards Ahmed:

After many days and nights he came to the Valley of Fire. A surging wall of flame barred his advance. He plunged through this to find another and another. Then his unaccustomed flesh shrank, his undisciplined soul rebelled, but the ring of choice upon his finger became a cool band of courage and he persevered, coming at length to a cooling stream of sweet waters.

So, praising Allah for his cleansing fires he fared onward.

Coming nigh unto the Cavern of Enchanted

Trees he would have entered therein but for a prodigious dragon that came snarling and bellowing from between two beetling crags. So he fought the dragon until it perished and he won past it into the Cavern of the Enchanted Trees. The midmost tree, when he had touched it with the Hermit's talisman, creaked and stretched and spoke to him, directing him where he might come upon the Midnight Sea.

So he left that place and fared onward many days and when he had come to the Midnight Sea, the Old Man thereof sent him many fathoms below the surface of the sea in search of a star-shaped key.

When he had found the star-shaped key, Ahmed felt himself clasped in the hairy arms of a vile and monstrous sea-spider. Which when he had killed, he would have returned to the surface of the sea, but that his ears were ravished with sweet sounds and certain daughters of the sea would have tempted him to stay with them and be the king of their fairy caverns. But, resisting temptation, he came again to the Old Man of the Sea who told him that his star-shaped key would unlock the stable of the winged horses.

"Take the white horse that nibbleth at thy right hand," he said, "for he alone knoweth the way to the Citadel of the Moon."

So, even as the Old Man of the Sea had said, Ahmed climbed to the cloud-borne abode of the winged horses and took from thence the white horse that nibbled at his right hand.

And the winged horse traveled with him far up the pathway of the sky and, after many days, he came to the base of the flight of a thousand steps that led to the far Citadel of the Moon. Up to this silvern shrine Ahmed fared alone. And there, wrapped about in a cloak of invisibility, was a silver chest that fitted itself to the palm of his hand.

His heart overflowed with gratitude to Allah. He felt within himself the power to do good, to make amends for all his grievous past.

At the caravansary in the desert the three Princes met according as they had planned. Each displayed his rare treasure and each believed his own the rarest.

In the breast of the Mongol Prince was hidden the knowledge that by now the Princess would have succumbed to the poison he had ordered.

With his customary suavity he suggested that the Indian Prince put his crystal to use and discover whether the Princess had waited as she pledged.

The crystal disclosed the desperate illness of the Princess—showed her surrounded by physicians helpless to give aidance and agonized over by her royal father.

Mindful that the Caliph had promised the throne of Bagdad to the fortunate suitor who won his daughter, the Persian and the Indian were impatient to go to her assistance. The Persian offered his rug to convey them and the Mongol pointed out that the apple might save her life if they arrived in time.

On the magic carpet the three Princes flew across the waste lands to Bagdad and appeared without warning in the sleeping-chamber of the Princess. With every appearance of sympathetic solicitude, the Mongol Prince made his way to the bedside of the dying maiden and by the magic of the healing that was inherent in the golden apple, he restored her to glowing health.

Far away at the flat rock within the defile in the Mountains of Dread Adventure, the flying horse alighted so that Ahmed might dismount. Then it flew away to its stable above the clouds.

The Hermit of the defile came to meet Ahmed. He saw the silver chest and gravely salaamed to the man who bore it.

"Only its rightful heritor can carry that magic chest," he said. "Thou hast won the power to do good than which there is no greater happiness."

He gestured toward the box in explanation of its uses. Ahmed, listening, pondered in his heart the secrets of the silver chest. Then he scattered from it some of the seeds it contained and saw before him a horse to his needs and a garb suited to the quest before him.

So he mounted and rode away toward Bagdad, wondering if now he might fairly compete for the hand of the Princess.

To the Princess came the knowledge that health had been restored to her. She begged her father to explain how this had come about.

Each in his turn the princely suitors claimed the credit of her cure.





"I," said the Mongol Prince, "with my golden apple, I saved your life."

"Not so," said the Indian Prince, "I—by discovering your plight in my magic crystal—I saved your life."

"They claim too much," said the Persian Prince. "I—with my rug—I saved your life."

And, while they argued among themselves, the little Slave of the Sand Board crept to the Princess' side and looked into the magic crystal.

She whispered to her mistress: "He cometh. He cometh. Gain time." She held the crystal up for the Princess to see.

The Princess gazed into the crystal and pressed her hands to her lips to stifle a cry of joy. For what she saw was Ahmed riding boldly, his head upflung, and he held high above his head the magic silver chest.

The Princess reflected for a moment and then summoned her father.

"Who can decide which of these gifts is rarest?" she said. "Without the crystal they would not have known, without the carpet they could not have come, without the apple they could not have saved me. Each had been useless without the other two."

Perhaps the Mongol Prince might have argued the matter but at this moment his Counselor, advised of events by the Mongol maid, came into the room.

Behind his fan he whispered to his Prince: "You have twenty thousand troops within the walls," and, soothed by this assurance, the Mongol Prince, with his customary soft composure spoke of taking quiet thought on the matter through the night.

Through the night twenty thousand Mongol troops threw off their disguises and took possession of Bagdad.

The Caliph and Persian and Indian were thrown into a cell and told that morning held death for them in vats of boiling oil.

Guards were sent to put away the attendants of the Princess and keep watch over her during the night.

When morning came, the Mongol Prince was comfortably ensconced on the throne of Bagdad. He ordered the Princess fetched before him.

Benumbed by the events of the night she came. Once more the cup of joy had been dashed from her lips. The hope roused by the sight of her beloved in the crystal was drowned in her despair. Unprotesting—she heard the Mongol Prince



bid her prepare for marriage to him and silent—numbed—she was led away.

Ahmed, pulling up at a well on the desert to make his ablutions and pray the dawn prayer, learned from frightened refugees that the Mongols had taken Bagdad. He mounted his horse and galloped to the gates of the city.

"Open wide the gates of Bagdad!" he ordered, and when the Mongol guard in the gate tower voiced a contemptuous refusal, he opened his magic chest and scattered seeds broadcast.

The Mongols on the battlemented walls watched in fascinated dismay.

Below them there appeared out of nothingness a group of shining white soldiers.

The guards bent lower to watch.

Ahmed's hand flashed in sowing motion—once—twice—thrice—the Mongols lost count.

And with every motion of that sowing hand, there appeared on the plain below unnumbered hosts of silver clad warriors.

Stark panic seized the Mongol soldiers. With one accord they fled from the wall, shouting warnings to their fellows within the town.

Out from their houses came the townspeople and into the town thronged the great white army.

Like a stream of white lava it poured through the town, covering all the streets with its wide expanse.

Before its steady oncoming, the horrid black shapes that were the Mongol army melted into nothingness.

Warned of the coming of the gleaming multitude, the Counselor rushed panic-stricken to the Mongol Prince to tell what he had heard.

"Set my guards at the Palace gates," his Prince ordered and hastened from the throne room.



But, ere he had fled far, came a runner, kneeling to say:
"Great Khan, every way of escape is blocked."

Then did the Mongol Prince bare his neck and order the runner to sever his head from his body.

The runner raised his sword, but the Mongol slave girl checked its fall.

"The flying carpet," she reminded, "and the Princess."

Again the smile of craft envisaged the Mongol Prince. He hurried away nor knew that the little Slave of the Lute, listening behind the arras, had caught the words and crept from the room.

To the sleeping-chamber of the Princess, where the rug was under guard, the Mongol Prince betook himself.

He ordered the spreading of the rug, and then—with a look of cunning and desire—his gaze encompassed the Princess. He strode toward her.

And while the Princess fled from his pursuit, the little Slave of the Lute plowed her way through the crowded

streets and bore to Ahmed the word of the peril of the Princess.

Ahmed could not wait for his army. With orders to a lieutenant to rescue all who were still under the yoke of the Mongols and to follow him to the Palace, he sped away.

It facilitated his speed to don the cloak of invisibility and a silver whirlwind swept through the Palace, knocking aside soldiers, furniture, whatever impeded.

The Mongol Prince had harried the Princess until she swooned.

His Counselor had joined him and, together, they placed the unconscious Princess on the rug and made the magic signs to lift it in flight.

They braced themselves for the uplift and then—they saw nothing and heard nothing—but they felt the impact of a lithe, muscular body and they measured their lengths on the floor.

Then they gasped in amaze as invisible hands lifted the Princess and carried her up the bridge that led from the room. Bent on possessing her, the Mongols followed.

Ahmed, dropping his white soldier over to the ground, then, as other in arms.

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The Persian must say over gratitude.

It was too m

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Straight to Ahmed dropped closed. Wavir out of the Pala into the desert star clusters:

Translating Fantasy Into Pictures

Fantasy is elusive. Its texture is woven of the slender threads of dreams. Its people move in a fairyland, where everything rests upon the light and airy foundation of fancy. This is the very spirit of "The Thief of Bagdad" and to translate it into pictures was a thing that conscripted all the artistic, mechanical and imaginative talents of many people. Into this picture has gone—not so many million feet of lumber or kegs of nails—but the very heart and ambition of scores of loyal workers that Mr. Fairbanks gathered around him.

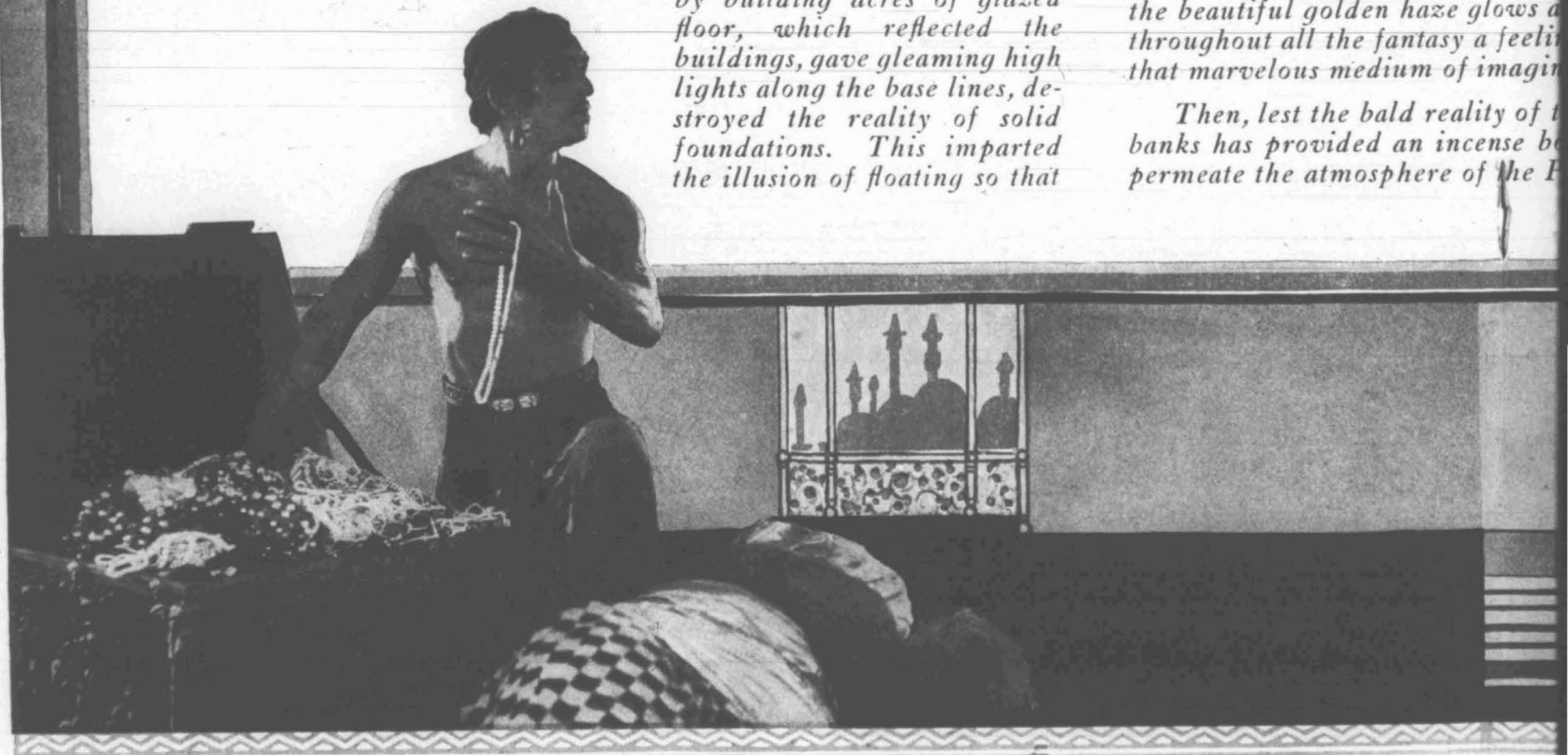
First of all, there was the basic fact that when a thing is photographed, it is given substance and reality. This was overcome by building acres of glazed floor, which reflected the buildings, gave gleaming high lights along the base lines, destroyed the reality of solid foundations. This imparted the illusion of floating so that

the magnificent structures, with their ascend, seem to have the fantastic rather than of being set firmly up

To further the illusion, the designed out of proportion to h windows and decorative effects a tive of the unreal.

Even the tinting and toning of the action; a roseate glow for the where the terrifying monsters ap the beautiful golden haze glows a throughout all the fantasy a feelin that marvelous medium of imagin

Then, lest the bald reality of t banks has provided an incense be permeate the atmosphere of the F



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Ahmed, dropping his cloak, revived the fainting Princess. His white soldiers handed the Mongol Prince and his Counselor over to the untender mercies of the Palace eunuchs. And then, as the reunited lovers would have clasped each other in arms of love, came an influx of grateful friends.

The Caliph, gladly bestowing his daughter upon their rescuer, was profuse in his expressions of satisfaction.

The Persian, the Indian, the dignitaries of the court, all must say over and over again their phrases of fervent gratitude.

It was too much.

Ahmed bethought him again of his magic cloak. He threw it round his Princess and himself. Scarce would it cover them both and the astonished court caught the twinkle of feet going away from them. They followed.

Straight to the magic rug tripped the twinkling feet. Ahmed dropped the cloak and again the lovers were disclosed. Waving farewells to the grateful court, they floated out of the Palace, over the heads of the dotting populace, out into the desert night and up toward the stars that spelled in star clusters: "Happiness Must Be Earned."

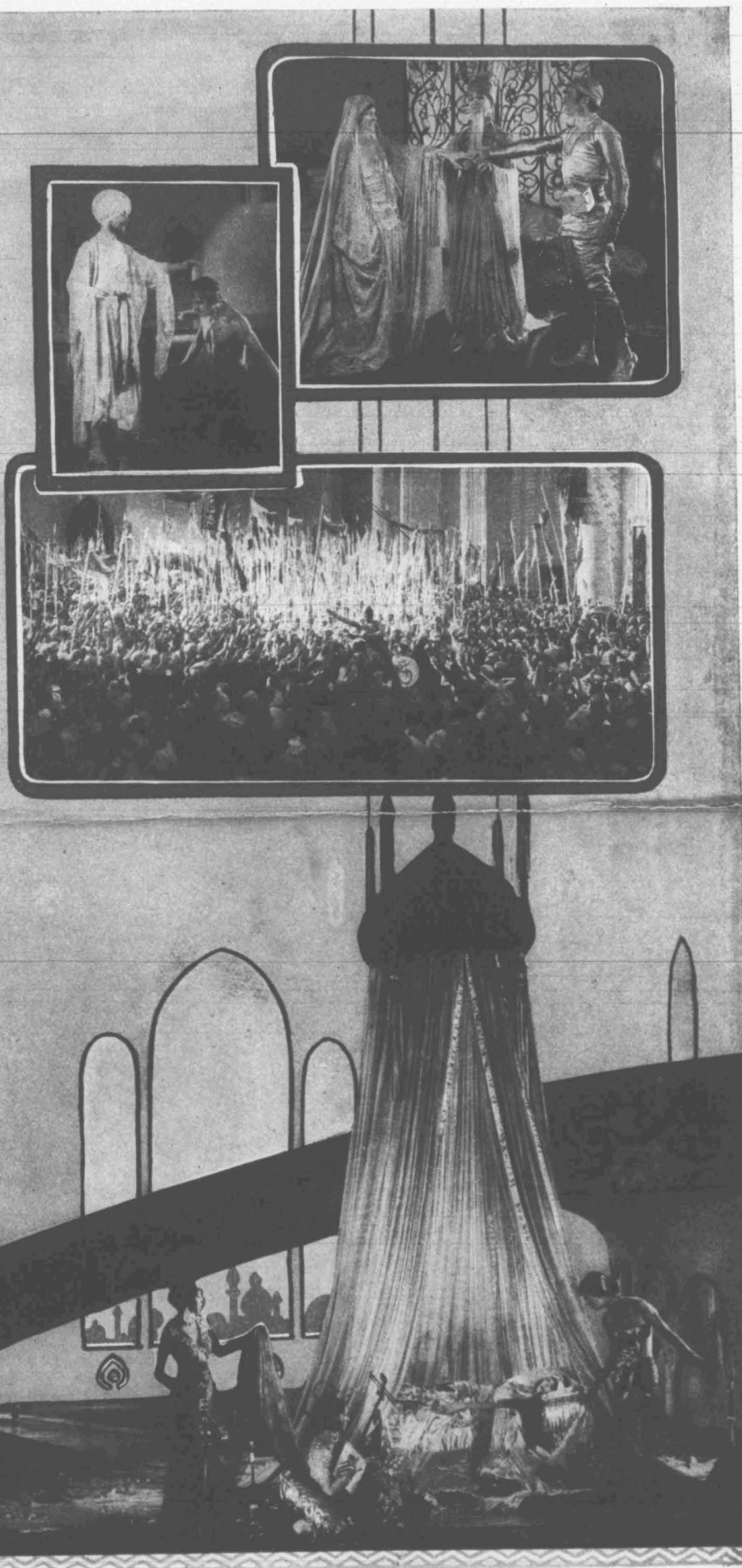
Pictures

ent structures, with their shadows growing darker as they to have the fantastic quality of hanging from the clouds of being set firmly upon the earth.

er the illusion, the environment of the characters was of proportion to human fact. Flowers, vases, stairs, decorative effects were given a bizarre quality suggestive of the unreal.

tinting and toning of the film is subtly co-related with roseate glow for the romantic moments; a garish green for the terrifying monsters appear; a soft Uranium sepia where a golden haze glows about the dream city of Bagdad and all the fantasy a feeling of rich Maxfield Parrish blue—the medium of imaginative whimsy.

at the bald reality of the theatre obtrude itself, Mr. Fairbrother provided an incense born of the flowers of the Orient, to create an atmosphere of the Pogany panels.



A few things to puzzle about
after you have seen
"The Thief of Bagdad"

The Flight of a Thousand Steps leading to the Citadel of the Moon.

The Spider many times bigger than a man.

The Living Dragon of gigantic size.

The Winged Horse that carries the thief in spectacular flight through space.

The Cloak of Invisibility which with weird effect shields the thief from human sight.

The Magic Carpet of Bagdad which bears its owner over the housetops and away into the Land of Romance.

The Cavern of Enchanted Trees.

The wondrous Idol so great in size that a man can stand upon its chin and barely reach its lips.

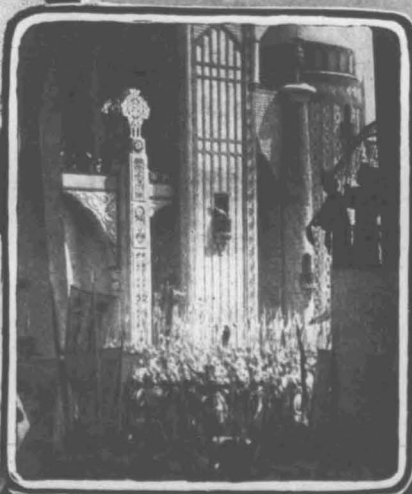
The Crystal Realm far beneath the floor of the sea, where beautiful sirens abide.

The Valley of Fire.

The Mountain of Dread Adventure.

The Sea of Midnight.

Scores of other features that render this glorious fantasy of ancient Bagdad the most enthralling spectacle ever brought to the screen.





What the New York Critics Say—

N. Y. COMMERCIAL—

The world's greatest "movie" arrived at the Liberty Theatre last evening. . . . "The Thief of Bagdad" challenges description. It is easily the most artistic picture ever shown in New York.

METROPOLITAN THEATRE GUIDE—

. . . We have seen nothing which matches it in imaginative power, splendor or conception, and absolute genius of photography. This is a case where the press representative might write his own story and never overdo the superlative.

N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE—

. . . 20,000 people gathered. . . . Numbers of policemen . . . were quite ineffectual. Someone had told us we should need at least twenty new adjectives to describe Douglas Fairbanks' new picture . . . the greatest thing that ever has been put on the screen! It would be foolish to compare "The Thief of Bagdad" with any other production, for it is totally unlike anything that ever has been done.

N. Y. DAILY NEWS—

Well, well, it was good to struggle in past the incense burners and the usher hours, sit down and rest your bones, and watch "The Thief of Bagdad" unroll itself. "The Thief of Bagdad" is a film which will exhaust fans' superlatives for some time to come.

JAY KAUFMAN—

. . . it is the greatest picture we have ever seen or ever expect to see. Extravagant? No. Mild? Yes. Why? Here's idea, story, beauty, romance, color, life, truth, imagination—all sheer perfection.

N. Y. TELEGRAM—

"The Thief of Bagdad" is a picture so fine and so full of incident that it demands several visits for its full enjoyment.

N. Y. AMERICAN—

Mr. Fairbanks has given us his finest picture and his finest work in "The Thief of Bagdad." . . . No one should miss seeing "The Thief of Bagdad." I only hope those who visit the Liberty Theatre will enjoy the picture as much as I did. This is a strong endorsement. I know, but "The Thief of Bagdad" merits it.

N. Y. JOURNAL OF COMMERCE—

Douglas Fairbanks and his newest feature photoplay, "The Thief of Bagdad," actually took New York by storm last evening. Thousands of persons clogged traffic of all kinds on West Forty-second Street, despite a platoon of reserve policemen summoned to handle them, from long before eight o'clock until nearly midnight, when the last scene had been flashed. . . . "The Thief of Bagdad" in its colossal magnificence beggars description.



N. Y. WORLD—
Yes for "The Thief of Bagdad."
The yes ought to be said early.
The yes is from its opening
scene to the final second so far
superior to anything of its gen-
eral character ever done
before that comparison is
rendered impossible.

KELCEY ALLEN—
If you want to see a motion
picture beauty, rich in oriental
tography, flawless in pho-
lighting, and perfect in
commend, let me recom-
Fairbanks to you Douglas
Thief of Bagdad, "The
ed last night at the Lib-
erty. * * * "The Thief of
Bagdad" will be with
us for a long time.

STAATS-ZEITUNG—
A motion picture is a motion
picture but Douglas
Fairbanks made us see the
error of our thought Tues-
day evening when he pre-
sented for the first time
his latest production, "The
Thief of Bagdad" at the
Liberty Theatre. * * * I
have run out of superla-
tives and adjectives in my
praise of this picture and
when I recuperate I will
write about it again.

N. Y. POST—
Once again Douglas Fair-
banks—for it is his new
production—has forward in
decided what can be done
showing intelligence and
with a camera.

BROOKLYN TIMES—
No matter how much you
may detest motion pictures,
you owe it to yourself to
enter the Liberty Theatre,
which had better be called
the house of wonder.

METCALFE—
Even the morons, who have
to be considered in all pic-
ture plays on account of
the importance attached to
their patronage by cheap
exhibitors, are bound to be
interested in the number-
less, gorgeous and scenic
effects.

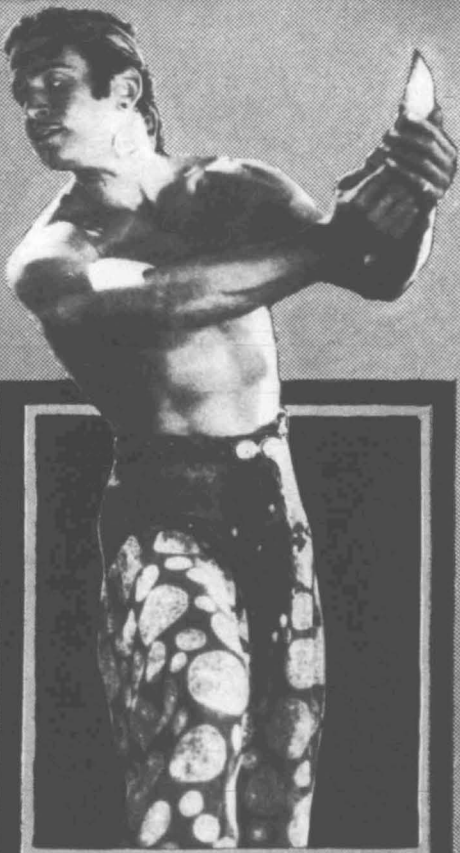
N. Y. SUN—
Towards the middle of it
last night the audience was
clapping every new setting
and the photoplay had be-
come a sort of orgy of rap-
ture. It is something to
come away in a bronze key-
stone in the hollow of the
case that will show some
prying generation of the
future how far Americans
came in ingenuity and
sensitiveness. * * *

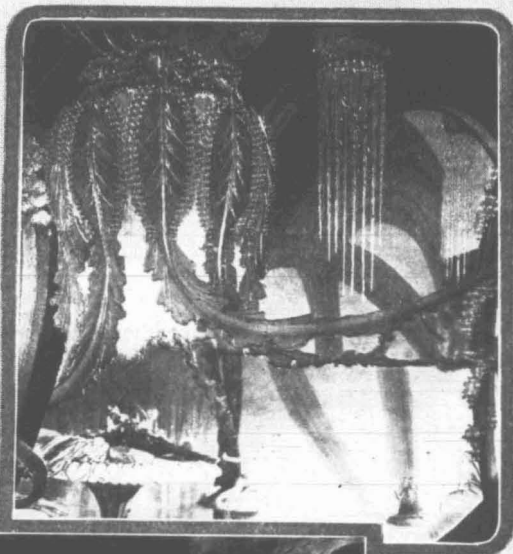
N. Y. JOURNAL—
A fantastic screen sym-
phony—fifteen reels of
rhapsodic rhythm. Fair-
banks is superb in his
characterization, the im-
color, the moods, the sen-
sation of the theme and
setting, give one the sensa-
tion of day-dreaming. * * *
I could go on, and on, for
every scene is more fasci-
nating than the one before.

BROOKLYN EAGLE—
* * * the gorgeous set-
tings, mythical scenes of
which there beauty, that
being in any more has never
and again the ultra-se-
lect first night audience
burst into night audi-
ence like scenes as enthu-
siasm flashed upon these fairy-
screen upon were Liberty
at the

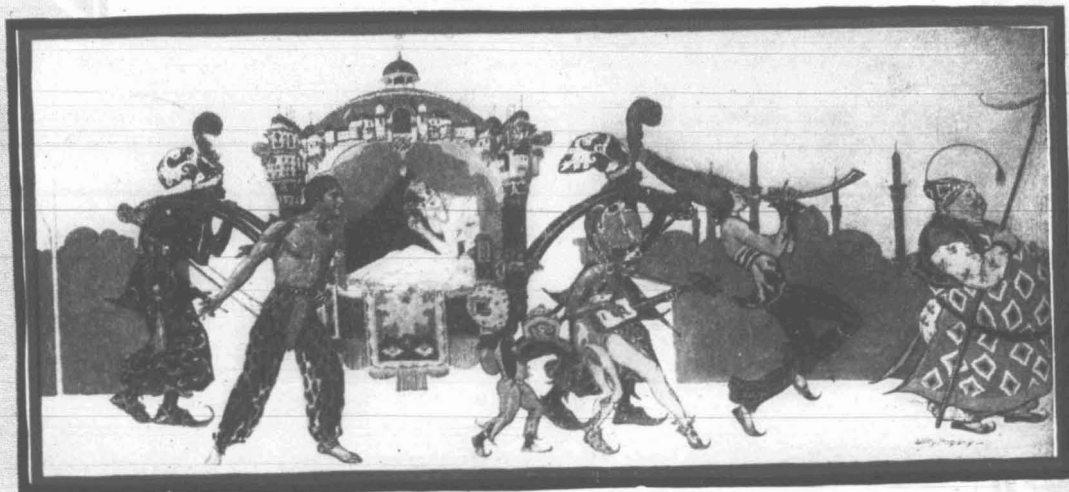
N. Y. TIMES—
It is an entrancing picture.
It is an entrancing and beautiful,
wholesome but compelling,
deliberate motion picture
a feat of art which has
never been
equalled.

N. Y. TELEGRAPH—
* * * transported a blas-
phemy night audience and be-
fore he permitted them to
retire he had them alter-
nately laughing, applaud-
ing and even shouting.





*Even to the Posters—has the idea
of fantasy been carried*

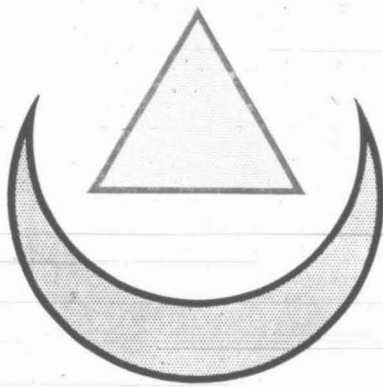


This extraordinary poster is the conception of Willie Pogany, whose sense of the bizarre combined with a genius for color has placed him in the front rank of contemporary artists. Mr. Pogany seems able somehow to capture the ephemeral spirit of imagery and imprison it in glowing color.



This is the work of Anton Grot, the Bavarian artist, a member of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Mr. Grot's famous painting, "The Shepherd's Dream," had a poetic quality that is evident in the flying horse poster he created for "The Thief of Bagdad," but in this later opus there is a sweep of feeling that more than fulfills the promise of his earlier work.





Fleming & Reavely, Inc., New York

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